









ADVENTURES  
SOCIAL AND  
LITERARY







DOUGLAS AINSLIE WHEN ATTACHE IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE.

ADVENTURES SOCIAL  
AND LITERARY  
*By* DOUGLAS AINSLIE

ILLUSTRATED

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Paullo leviora canamus

*(Let us talk for a little of lighter things)*



## FOREWORD

THE following pages of Adventures should be looked upon and read as though one had chanced to meet the Author at a country-house party, and after a British breakfast, damask tablecloth, silver, silver everywhere, and roses and rolls and simmering dishes, and honey taken episodically by each guest as he and she strolls into the dining-room during the course of the morning, two or three or four of the number of either sex happen to stroll out upon the soft emerald lawn and stand under the big cedar that shades them from the sun, already high risen in the sky. The Author tells some of his experiences for twenty minutes or so, after which the impromptu party separates, to meet perhaps, equally by accident, after luncheon, in one of the broad bay-windows looking over the lake and distant woodlands : one solitary church spire gives a note of idealism to the landscape. More stories then, and perhaps a boating excursion on the lake, where some may get a little wet, but they will not catch a severe cold.

The Author's chief regret is that he is obliged to monopolize the conversation on this occasion (for listening well to others is half of good conversation).

A late famous ambassador, whose son was the author's good friend, was once staying with Dr. Jowett at Balliol. He grew cheerful and amusing with the champagne, and when the port came and the ladies retired,

though several undergraduates remained, he became ultra facetious. Jowett listened to the beginning of a tale that opened like a scarlet geranium and gave signs of concluding in the orchid-house—then suddenly he piped out in his falsetto treble: “Sir Jasper, will you finish your story in the drawing-room?”

I hope mine may begin and end there or as above in the shade of the cedar after breakfast, without offence, although I shall talk freely of the living as well as of the dead. Thought is so much more real than the physical body that it triumphs over the accident of death.

THE ATHENÆUM,  
PALL MALL,  
1922.

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# Adventures Social and Literary

## CHAPTER I

### EARLIEST DAYS

Birth in Paris—A Marquis de Marque—The Duc's bet—Vanilla Ice—My Grandfather, James Grant Duff—My Godfather's Gift—Dindin—Hide-and-Seek with a Bear—Imperial Disguise—The Judge's Joke—The old Earl of Fife—In and out of Irons—Old Fyvie—A Delgaty Ghost—Delgaty repaired 1525.

VOLUMES have been written about "the adventures of the soul among masterpieces." The following pages will also deal with masterpieces, though the majority of these will be inspired rather by life than by art.

I have always been pleased to think that I was born geographically a Parisian, though my father is a Scotsman and my mother's family, the Morgans, are of Welsh descent, and can consequently lay no immediate claim to French blood. But I believe that those who have had the privilege of drawing their first breath in the city by the Seine are to some extent, more or less according to temperament, touched by her wand to love of wit and beauty.

I was born on the 16th of December 1866 at 127 Rue La Pérouse. My father had come to Paris from St. Petersburg to be secretary of Embassy to Lord Cowley, who was then British Ambassador. At St. Petersburg, where he had filled a similar post, he had wooed and won my mother.

Paris ! The word is and has always been a talisman for me, though I have but the faintest recollections of that earliest Paris, when the Imperial Eagle still floated above the Palace of the Tuileries and the Second Empire was dancing down the dangerous flowery way, which led to the Franco-German War. A noisy world of pleasure seekers :

Quel bruit ferait le monde  
Le jour où Paris se tairait !

as they used to sing.

The noise that Paris then made must certainly have been considerable, and I gather from an unimpeachable source that to this noise my infant lungs made an early and important contribution. I am said, indeed, to have developed, through steady and assiduous practice, astonishing lung-power, little appreciated by an elderly Marquis who dwelt immediately above the nursery. My dusky Nounou and my mother tried in vain to stem the torrent of infantine eloquence—and the Marquis suddenly departed. I have often tried to ascertain precisely who was this first person to take an interest in my voice, but have always failed. I was once told, however, that prior to my birth, the French servant Auguste had been asked who the Marquis was—his full name—was he really a Marquis? Auguste, who must have been a wag in his small way, smiled discreetly and replied : “ *Monsieur, c'est certainement un Marquis, mais ce n'est pas un Marquis de Marque.* ” Poor markless Marquis ! He had evidently failed to come up to Auguste's standard of what a Marquis should be. Problem : What was a Marquis of mark to a Parisian valet at the end of the Second Empire? I suspect he must have been some mushroom creation of



FANNY ELIZABETH AINSLIE.  
The author's mother,





Napoleon III, like our own batches of undistinguished peers (rightly despised by those who have not been insulted in a like manner), and I remember very well hearing it said in Paris in the 'nineties that the Ducs and Princes of the First Empire drew a very clear social line between themselves, and the results of the Louis Napoleon's and the Duc de Morny's *coup d'état*. Certainly, the late Duc de Morny, his descendant, had a good deal of that sort of façade which so easily rubs off and reveals the common clay beneath. He was celebrated for his financial schemes, which invariably ended *ceteris paribus*—like the Second Empire.

But what an amusing time they must have had, those D'Orsays, those Ducs de Morny and Ducs de Gramont Caderousse!—though this latter, by the way, depended not upon Napoleon, but upon ancient kings of France for his titular distinctions. They must have been like big schoolboys, always out on the spree. This little joke is typical of the period, though the perpetrator was the last personage named.

One April day he made a big bet that he would prevent the Emperor and Empress, who were to go in State to the Races at Longchamps for the Grand Prix that afternoon, from driving down the Champs Elysées on their return to Paris. He pledged himself to have no intercourse in the meantime with any of the surroundings of the Emperor high or low. Those who knew of the bet exhausted themselves in conjectures when they saw Gramont-Caderousse quietly lunching on the great day at the Jockey Club on the Boulevard des Italiens with his inseparable friend, De la Hante. He remained there until late in the afternoon playing écarté and smoking, and it was not until nearly six

o'clock that he sent for his carriage, telling the coachman to put him and his friend down at a short distance from the Arc de Triomphe. The Duc stepped from his carriage followed by his friend, and walked slowly to the edge of the curb at the Place de l'Etoile, in the centre of which stands the Arc de Triomphe at the top of the broad Avenue des Champs Elysées. The thunder of the first horses returning from the races was heard in the distance, as the Duc, wearing the rosette of the Legion of Honour, took from his pocket a simple yard measure, from which he drew the tape as he handed the coil to his friend. The *sergents de ville* and mounted police on duty immediately approached with enquiries as to what it was proposed to do with the measure, whereupon the Duc waved them away with a magnificent gesture. They hesitated for a moment, and then, over-awed by the high grade of the rosette and the extreme seriousness of its wearer, whom they held to be acting under mysterious Imperial orders in connection with the roadway, proceeded to divert the whole of the racing-traffic, including the carriages containing the Emperor and Empress and suite, down the side avenues. Meanwhile Gramont-Caderousse had crossed the broad avenue and stood facing his friend with the yard measure in one hand spanning the distance between them, and in the other a note-book in which he was gravely studying entirely fantastic lines of figures. The cheque which he received that evening was also fantastic—but for a definite sum—one of those dreams that come true across the banker's counter.

And was it Monsieur Mirès or the quaint Baron de Saint-Cricq who went to the celebrated Tortoni's when it was most crowded with rank and fashion one summer

afternoon, and asking for a vanilla and a strawberry ice, when he had obtained them, quietly took off his boots and ladled the vanilla into one boot, the strawberry into the other, gravely repeating the while like a lesson well learned : " Vanilla ice right boot ! Strawberry ice left boot ! "

But I must return to my cradle and add that my mother was busily running her memory's eye over such names as most appealed to her and seemed most suitable to her first-born, such as Napoleon (we two have always immensely admired him), Augustus, Emanuel, etc., when a telegram came from the " advocate " in Aberdeen : " Your son must be christened Douglas Ainslie and nothing more by the terms of Mr. Douglas Ainslie's will." This Mr. Douglas Ainslie was my father's maternal uncle, and had just left him the whole of his property, Delgaty Castle in Aberdeenshire and Blervie in Moray, on condition of his adopting the surname of Ainslie in place of Grant Duff, and calling his eldest son Douglas. Thus was I deprived of any Christian name other than that which in old days sent a thrill through the unhappy populations of Berwick-upon-Tweed and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. But I have more than once regretted the surname of Grant Duff, borne by my father and father's father, Grant Duff of Eden and historian and Governor of the Mahrattas <sup>1</sup> from Sattara for more than twelve years, under the East India Company. My late uncle, my father's brother, Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff, G.C.I.E., G.C.S.I., to whom I shall refer later, also distinguished himself in India as Governor of Madras,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Murray has just issued a reprint of this work, which has held its own as the chief authority on this part of our Empire for well over a hundred years.

and I myself have always felt a strong inclination to study that country, an inclination which did not find favour with my parents, who refused for too much love to allow me to visit India at the age of seventeen at my uncle's invitation from Madras. I have often wished that I had made earlier acquaintance with the great country, which my own blood has done something to consolidate with the British Empire.

There is interesting evidence of the value of my grandfather's contribution in Leslie Stephen's *Life of his brother, Sir James Fitz James Stephen, the Judge of the Supreme Court*, whom I used often to meet at York House. He was the best physical and mental specimen of a judge that ever I met. His great moral and intellectual powers were encased in a bulky and ponderous body. He was at every point Rhadamanthus. Even when dealing with such kickshaws as mutton-cutlets and cold ham at the breakfast table, he did so in a severe and final manner, for they were speedily condemned to disappearance, while the Judge of the Supreme Court maintained his perfectly unbiassed supremacy. He had, of course, like all of us, his human side, and genuinely enjoyed good literature. I remember his reading the *Divine Comedy* with my aunt, Lady Grant Duff, who also had something of the severe and judicial about her, yet in her case coupled with and softened by a generous, loving and amiable disposition—when she allowed it to appear. I remember thinking as I watched the two fine heads posing over a difficult passage that here was just such an audience as Dante would have liked. For no poet has ever been more severely judicial than he in his great works ; one feels that on many occasions he has positively enjoyed uttering the sentence of punishment

as he "brands" the culprit and passes on. Were I Landor I should write a dialogue between Sir James and Dante on comparative mediæval and modern jurisprudence, with Sir Charles Darling intervening for a little light relief.

Leslie Stephen's reference to my grandfather reads as follows : "The Indian Empire is the most marvellous proof of this (he is referring to the many great actions which are completely forgotten) that the world can supply. A man died not long ago who, at twenty-five years of age, with no previous training, was set to govern a kingdom with absolute power, and who did govern it so wisely and firmly that he literally changed a wilderness into a fruitful land. Probably no one who reads these lines will guess to whom they allude. I can, however, say that they allude to James Grant Duff (1789-1858), author of the *History of the Mahrattas*, and father of his (Sir James Fitz James Stephen's) friend, Sir Mountstuart."

My grandfather eventually returned to England and married a very beautiful girl, whose parents insisted upon his abandoning further service in India as a condition of the marriage. He refused most brilliant offers equivalent to the India Council of to-day, and retired to his estate of Eden in Banffshire on the River Deveron. Here he spent a fortune on farming, and revelled in the possession of a herd of black cattle, still famous in the annals of the North of Scotland. But my father tells me that his talk always returned to India : where a man's life-work was, there shall his heart be also.

Shortly after my first appearance on any stage, and the vocal efforts that accompanied it, my parents removed to St. Germain, whence my father went and came

daily from the Embassy. He describes his colleagues at that time as devoted to French society, not exactly of the Faubourg St. Germain type, which it is popularly supposed that diplomatists frequent, but which is rarely at any period entered by them. Lurid tragedies and comedies in little have come down to me, but I shall draw a veil over them and over the ashes that have so long been at rest, for it is a curious fact that all my father's colleagues in the Chancellery at this period were in their graves within ten years of his arrival at the Embassy. For some of them, as my friend Colonel Claude Lowther used to say at Madrid : *l'Ambassade c'était l'Embrassade!*

His posts, prior to Paris, had been Dresden and then St. Petersburg, where the Ambassador was Lord Napier and Ettrick, whom I remember when I was a very little boy, and can still visualize with the help of a quaint little photo taken by my mother, a pioneer of the gentle art of sun-painting—but the victim of those days was fully conscious of being the target of the camera, and was indeed commanded to remain perfectly motionless for periods that to us would seem eternities. But I do not wonder that Lord Napier submitted to all this at my mother's hands with the best possible grace, for no one has yet been met with capable of resisting her charm. Attributable no doubt to a like cause was Lord Napier's acceptance of the post of godfather to the writer of these lines—godfather and bestower of a golden goblet surrounded with the signs of the Zodiac in relief, from which he has imbibed many milky potations.

My father, as I have said, first made my mother's acquaintance at St. Petersburg, where her father, Mr. John Henry Morgan, occupied a unique position. He was





LORD NAPIER AND ETRICK, BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO RUSSIA.



the founder of the first Anglo-Russian bank, and had also an immense timber business. He afterwards took into partnership old Mr. John Hubbard, and did everything for him and for his family, which still flourishes in his descendants, and has acquired the peerage of Addington. At this period my grandfather, Mr. Morgan, married the beautiful Miss Mary Parland, my dearly loved grandmother “Dindin,” whose memory is as bright and fresh with me to-day as though I had just met her with her scent-bottle in one hand and two pink bon-bons in the other for her pet grandson, who is waiting at the bottom of the great winding stone staircase of Delgaty to go out fishing by the lake. She is sitting on the green bench there at the end—I can smell the varnish on it now, and I am again engaged in the prodigious adventure of the first trout which is leaping its height out of the water, as I am leaping mine with joy on the bank. We land it between us, and bear it home in triumph to be admired by all the family, and then by the entire kitchen staff, before it is eventually rescued from two very small scaly hands that pertinaciously cling to their treasure.

Dearest of grandmothers, early called away, in your soft dark dress with the peacock blue and green lights upon it! I have only seen you smiling, always sweet and smiling, through all these years, though I fear that your own early days were by no means all made of smiles.

Imagine taking a beautiful young woman, accustomed to every luxury, to Archangel for her honeymoon! Yet I believe that Mr. Morgan did this. Archangel to-day is a dismal spot enough, difficult of access even before Bolshevism. What must it have been a hundred years

ago? And she had to stay there for months and months while Mr. Morgan made wonderful journeys in quest of new forests to conquer, returning to his fair young wife with tales of wild sport among the elk and the bears, which atone to a man for the desolation. Small wonder that when she returned to St. Petersburg a queen of beauty, she danced the morning in for the hearts of her courtiers.

Mr. Morgan was a great sportsman, and in winter, even while living in St. Petersburg, used to fling business and pleasure—his pleasures were numerous—to the winds—when the peasant arrived with news of a bear marked down in its cave. On one occasion he answered such an appeal as usual, during a sudden thaw towards the end of February, but he had on his long snowshoes, made for gliding over the six-foot-deep snow, and the servant who was with him to stand beside, as often before, with the spear in readiness, should the bullet fail to speed quite straight and the bear come on. This time my grandfather's aim was not quite so accurate as usual; the bear rolled over, but recovered himself and saw his enemy. He was not far off, and there was no time to load the old-fashioned rifle; but my grandfather stood his ground in quiet confidence, with his eyes on the bear, just putting his hand behind him for the spear. *No spear was there!* Turning, he saw the coward scudding away with the weapon; he had been unable to resist the promptings of fear when he saw the bear come on. There was no chance of escape by flight now, for the bear was hardly forty yards off and moving amazingly fast, so my grandfather did the only thing possible—he slipped out of his snow-shoes and sunk down in the deep snow until his head was below its level. Thus he hoped that the

wounded monster might not find him. But bruin came on, guided by his nose, and paused over the hole in the white carpet. Then rip, rip, with a last effort, as his mighty claws rent the cheeks of his slayer, and he himself fell dead on the top of him.

Hours passed insensible, and my grandfather heard moujiks' voices. "He is dead, or he is nearly dead, little brother—his blood is everywhere—better a good blow on the head to end his pain."

He managed to speak, and offered them a thousand roubles each if they would carry him to his sledge and take him to St. Petersburg.

On his arrival there he was again insensible, and the doctors ordered him to remain in the dark for many weeks, as both eyes were menaced. He gradually began to mend and to recognize those about him by their voices. My mother had always been his favourite, and he now insisted that she alone, a girl of seventeen, should remain at his pillow. My mother has often told me of that trying time, and of the shock she received when she saw her father's handsome face so fearfully mauled.

He had long been noted as the handsomest man in the capital, and the Emperor Nicholas I. made him his especial friend. I wish we possessed, as we possess his many orders and decorations, a picture of the two walking together as they so often did along the Nevski Prospekt. Nicholas I. was the last Czar of all the Russias to venture unescorted along the streets of Petersburg, and he, too, was noted for his height and handsome appearance. A pretty story is told of him disguised at a fancy ball, to which he had gone incognito, like Haroun al Raschid of the *Nights*. He approached and entered into conversation

with a certain fair lady, known as a wit, and after dancing with her, said : " Do you know with whom you are talking ? " " I think so," she replied. " Then say something that shall show me you know, without telling." " You have the stature of your trade " (*Vous avez la taille de votre métier*) was the reply. The Emperor was delighted. His mysterious end was in harmony with what must have been a singularly noble and romantic temperament. His patronage of British enterprise in the person of Mr. Morgan was in harmony with the tradition of Peter the Great, whose visit to London is historical. The behaviour and ideals of the Bolsheviks and their sympathizers outside Russia makes the life and deeds of the latter monarch read like a mild tract.

My grandfather had three children, a son and two daughters, of whom my mother was the youngest. Before the appearance of my father at St. Petersburg a number of Russians had asked to be allowed to pay their addresses, but Mr. Morgan was determined that neither of his daughters should marry a Russian, which apart from any selfish consideration, in view of recent events, seems to bear evidence of considerable foresight. My uncle, Delmar Morgan, the geographer and explorer of Mongolia with Prejevalsky, was also a sceptic as to Russian stability, and as trustee of my mother's future, insisted on removing a considerable portion of it to England, greatly to the disgust of his fellow trustees. It is curious how blind most people were as to the instability of the Russian Empire owing to the instability of the Russian character, which is the true cause of the complete catastrophe. Of the many Russians I have met the late Prince Alexis Orloff, with whom I used to stay in the Rue St. Dominique, Paris,



MARY A. MORGAN.  
The author's maternal grandmother.





was the only one who removed his fortune in time. My greatest Russian friend had, in 1913, a revenue of eight millions of francs, or about £400,000, from his Russian properties. In 1916, *nil*. I think this would be difficult to beat.

My dear sweet aunt Minnie, mother's sister, married an Irishman, Sir Thomas Snagge, the County Court Judge, well known at the Garrick Club and on his Oxford circuit. He was an agreeable, witty man, a little too fond, perhaps, of insisting upon his joke being taken as sterling when it was not more than, shall we say, aluminium. There he sometimes caught a tartar, as once when out shooting with us at Delgaty, he remarked to a very small lad next him in the line and carrying his cartridges: "I've made an appointment to meet a hare by that big tree we're coming to." The lad said nothing. They walked on a few steps, when the hare got up right enough, and Sir Thomas discharged both barrels without producing any visible effect. "It's no the hare that's to blame at any rate," came in a shrill treble from his Honour's side. The Judge made no more jokes with that boy.

Sir Thomas left a large family, of whom the eldest son, Mordaunt, is the most distinguished. He now occupies, curiously enough, the exact position as County Court Judge, and covers the same counties as his late father. The loss of an eye at Eton football has not been allowed by him to damage his career.

I observe that I have again left the cradle, and may as well now do so for good and all. We went down to Fontainebleau soon after the incident of the Marquis, and my father used to go to and from the Embassy to the Forest. But the bricks and mortar

of the Rue St. Honoré and the future Embassy made an ever lessening appeal to him as compared with his "ain fireside" in Scotland. He had no eye for the razzle-dazzle of the Second Empire, and soon sent in his resignation. His German scholarship had won him the Tylorian at Oxford when he was at Balliol College. His fellow scholar on that occasion was the poet Swinburne, with whom, however, he tells me that, unlike his son, he had no intercourse. Swinburne won the French Tylorian the year my father won the German.

While Delgaty was being got ready for us my parents took a small estate in Fife called Ramorney, and also bought 70 Lancaster Gate, which is connected with some of my earliest recollections. I was still in the nursery at this period, but had already developed a love for zoology and caressed a stuffed guinea-pig with ardour, greatly regretting that it was not allowed to be alive. 70 Lancaster Gate, had a wall staircase crowned with "a dome of many coloured glass," and I used often to contemplate this with admiration. Where I met, at sixteen, with the line in Shelley, my memory immediately called up the lofty building, with its dark stairway and giant front drawing-room facing my father's grim, dim study. The school-room looked out upon a fine selection of angular drab-coloured brick walls and chimneys. My brother Percy and I sat in this room with our French governess, who also instructed us (very imperfectly to judge by results) in arithmetic and other R's, made as unpleasant as possible according to the tradition which still held sway in teaching. Yet Mademoiselle Arnaud was a delightful person—I can still see her clearly with a large pencil stuck between two buttons of her dress,

trying to make us familiar with the language of my native land. The angular outlook and the bewildered pupils might have presented a theme for cubist perspectives. Our walks with the nurses were chiefly in Kensington Gardens, where I added entomology to my interests by capturing several butterflies. At a later period I sailed a boat on the Round Pond, but my pleasure therein was damped by the presence of a man with a real little steamer that puffed and didn't care a bit which way the wind blew or what height were the waves. (The Round Pond is one of the few things which seems to have remained quite unchanged since the 'seventies, and I can easily step back into them by merely standing a few moments at its brink—same little waves, same little ships, same little folk as of yore including myself.

Soon after this period a tutor was engaged for myself and my brother Percy. Mr. Edmund John Melliish Irons was son of a stern divine, who had written upon St. Paul and produced a numerous family. He was tall and rather cadaverous in appearance, with sunken eyes, a stoop, and a rather sinister smile. To him our education was confided, and we were sent up from Lancaster Gate to Delgaty in the summer of '77. Delgaty was looking its best, surrounded with lofty elm and lime trees, above which it towered its hundred feet. Grim battlements and gargoyles with the bust of Hoch Hay of Delgaty fixed in his niche looked down from the summit. The origin of Hoch Hay is obscure, but he was probably modelled upon some ancient scion of the House of Hay, former possessors of the Castle. Others relate that "Hoch Hay" was an exclamation uttered by some warrior Hay, who gave vent to it as he mopped his brow after repelling an onslaught of

the Danes, in which he had been successful by dint of harnessing his unwilling retainers to the yoke—witness the motto : *Sub Jugum*. Shall I continue?

Delgaty has been in the hands of several proprietors, mostly of my family, since the days of Hay of Delgaty, when, with Strathbogie, it was one of the two strongholds of the Catholics in the north of Scotland. In the early nineteenth century, however, it passed into the hands of our cousins, the Fifes. The late Duke told me that he had spent much of his childhood there, and often fished in the burn of Idoch. His father is one of my earliest recollections at Delgaty, a wonderful old gentleman with a most magnificent head of chestnut hair. I remember I was gazing at it with admiration when he came over from Duff House to see us and was sitting in the small drawing-room ; then, to my utter amazement, he suddenly removed what appeared to me to be his scalp, and producing a small comb began carefully to arrange the curls of his head as it rested upon his knee. I was too young to remember any of the good stories for which he was famed—he was equally friendly with all—patriarchal and benign as became the owner of more than a million acres—he would engage in animated exchange of pleasantries with the farmers on his way out from Aberdeen to Duff House, and on one occasion the farmers, being sure that he would again offer them a draft of whisky from the capacious flask, which had already been circulating in the carriage, managed to abstract it from his pocket, expecting to enjoy his consternation at the loss. Not at all : the Earl merely placed his hand in the other pocket and produced another flask of equal size, which he handed round as though nothing out of the

way had occurred, disdaining to inquire as to the fate of the first.

Delgaty is nearly forty miles from Aberdeen. Remote country places must have been far gayer in the old days than they are now. Aberdeen in winter was the ideal of the inhabitants of the north-eastern part of Scotland, Edinburgh being a kind of Mecca only attained by the happy few. As to London, our cousin and neighbour, Garden Duff of Hatton, once showed me the accounts of his grandfather who had actually penetrated to London, and (characteristically) had kept careful note of his expenses from the historical "sax-pence" to sums yet more considerable. My own forbears used to pay potentous visits to one another in family chariots, which would carry them fifty miles or so from their homes in a day. The visit was usually three weeks. Nowadays, during the summer, there is a flood of all manner of folk from the south, who hire the old places and rush back to London when they have had their fill of fresh air and lost sufficient salmon-fies. With the winter, the whole countryside sleeps beneath its pall of snow.

We arrived at Delgaty in the summer, and in the intervals of learning Latin, which Mr. Irons did teach a little, while neglecting such trifles as mathematics, history, and geography, I proceeded to teach him how to cast a trout fly. He was astonishingly ignorant of sport in any form, and despite repeated warnings persisted in standing about ten yards to my rear, with the natural result that the fly (my best one, as I remarked as it was being extracted) became firmly imbedded in the fleshy part of his nose. This was a painful business for both of us in more senses than one. Out shooting he was death to cartridges and

dangerous to beaters, but otherwise harmless. The old head-keeper, Terras, used to place him at remote points for "a shot at a hare," but the latter was quite safe. I think he must have suffered from obliquity of vision, but his eagerness and confidence in his own capacities were quite inexhaustible.

Hopeless as a sportsman and pedagogue, he was better endowed as a lover, and proceeded to pay court to the daughter of a neighbouring laird, for which purpose he borrowed my pony. I was delighted to lend it, as my brother and I were thus rid of his presence for a good part of the day. Unfortunately, however, the pony rather resented the six-foot-two of the amorous preceptor, and after one or two attempts landed him safely on the gravel drive, to our considerable amusement.

Poor Irons, his mild career as extempore Don Juan was cut short by the return of my parents. He was dismissed, and I believe died soon after of heart disease, whether accelerated by his experiences in the north or not I cannot tell. I have never been fortunate in pedagogues.

Percy and I went over to see our neighbour, dear old Mrs. Tait Gordon, of Fyvie Castle, during these months we were in the iron grip. She was a very quaint old lady, most kind to us boys, whom she plied with all manner of toffees and other treacly delights. But with grown-up visitors her methods were different. Speaking with a broad Scots accent, she used, after breakfast, to announce out the orders for the day: "Mr. McLachlan, ye'll go and row Lady Sempill and the Misses Duff on the lake till the stroke of twelve, then ye can just gae and catch a few troots in the Ythen to our dinner—and see ye're no late for lunch."

“ Sir Archie, ye’ll tak’ the Dowager of Balburnie for a walk round the policies, and see ye keep oot o’ the field with the bull in’t, for I ken ye can tak guid’ care o’ yersel, but I’m no sae sure aboot the leddys ” etc. People used to be in fits of suppressed laughter before she had finished her commandments. All delighted to go and stay at Fyvie to be ordered about for a day or two. I wonder if the late Lord Astor had ever heard of her ; but his parties, although people were carefully told what to do, were not to be compared for amusement with the Fyvie of old days.

Fyvie has passed into the hands of a Mr. Forbes Leith, created Lord Leith, and decorated in what I believe is known as the best mid-Victorian taste. Its old red sandstone walls now hide their blushes beneath swathes of tartan, and the atmosphere is Scots-Belgravian.

Fyvie is better known than Delgaty, and so are its legends, connected with lack of direct heirs—male and the three weeping stones—“ the last ye’ll never git ”—and till then there will never be an heir male to Fyvie—will keep for perhaps another volume. At Delgaty we are blessed with the ghost of the lady who was hurled from the battlements by a monk—the illustration shows that she had some distance to fall. Personally, I have never been honoured with a sight of her, though I have given her ample opportunity. She is said to walk up the hundred steps of the grand staircase at midnight. I have often vainly awaited her tread. But some years ago a Mrs. L. O.,<sup>1</sup> neighbour, for whom I had just been writing verses to commemorate a son killed on the Afghan frontier, was sitting with me in the hall. She suddenly asked if I had ever seen

<sup>1</sup> Names altered.

"any of the Delgaty ghosts." I replied that I had not. "Well, I have seen one of them," she said quietly.

"You remember, no doubt, my husband Dick?" I replied that I had known him as a little boy when he was a young man. "He died in a tragic way in a railway accident ten years ago. He and I were staying at Delgaty, and had brought with us our baby girl, whose cot was by the fireplace in our bedroom on the night in question. It was 'mid-October and chilly weather, so a big fire had been made in the cloister room, that large south bedroom with the three windows, the four-poster bed, and the queer little squint-hole to the north cut into six foot thick of wall. When we came up to bed about eleven our baby girl was sleeping peacefully and the fire burned high and bright. Dick was a sound sleeper, and was soon audibly in dreamland. As I blew out my candle, after reading a few pages of your *Song of the Stewarts*, which your mother had lent me, I remember, I glanced at the cot which was between us and the fire, some little distance off in the big room. As a rule I slept as soundly as Dick, and I don't know what woke me suddenly with a start. The fire had sunk to a dull red glow; I gazed at it a moment or two, still half asleep, but could not see the cot clearly. I thought at first it was the dim light of the fire (I had not struck a match) that made the place where it should be so dark. But suddenly I caught sight of a part of the white covering and noticed that the darkness between me and the cot *had slightly moved*. Thoroughly startled and aroused, I sat up in bed and stared intently in the direction of the cot. Again a slight motion, and this time I saw that a figure draped in



black was bending over the child. I gave Dick a violent push : he woke up with 'What is it?' coming drowsily from his lips. I pointed to the cot, and as I did so, saw something else white—a faint circlet of white in the air above the cradle. Suddenly it disappeared, and in its place I clearly saw a man's emaciated face with black eyes blazing with hatred. That, too, disappeared as suddenly as the circlet, which I then realized must have been the scapular of a monk. Meanwhile, Dick had jumped out of bed and rushed to the child. I lit the gas and rushed to my baby. She was still sleeping peacefully ; no harm had apparently come to her, but if I had not awakened I am sure the monk would have achieved his purpose, whatever it was. Dick said he certainly saw something move and that was all, but quite enough to set him in motion too! We searched the room and the landing opening into four other bedrooms carefully on the spot, but saw nothing. We thought it better to say nothing about the matter in the castle next day, as servants are so easily frightened. Your family never heard the story."

"What became of the little girl? Did she grow up?"

"Yes, she lived till she was twenty-three, married, and died having a baby in Jamaica at the age of twenty-three."

I hope my readers will not look upon me as over credulous when I say that I have every confidence in the truth of this curious story, told in much the same words as I have used and on an occasion when the teller was certainly in no mood for flights of imagination. It is also corroborated in my experience by other events, some of which I may mention later.

Aberdeenshire, though it does not contain Glamis Castle within its marches, is yet so full of haunted castles and towers that, as was once said of another castle, one does not have to reach the dwelling house to begin having experiences, but overtakes a hearse and pair in the avenue. Thus one is never really dull in the north. There is always society—of a sort.

Forglen House is a near neighbour on the River Deveron, but a thing of yesterday compared with Delgaty, though the Abercrombys have been there from father to son for a good many generations, and Forglen has now got a stretch of the Deveron which used to belong to Delgaty. At Delgaty the dining-room is built out (on the left in the photo reproduced) and is about fifty yards from the kitchen on the right, with the billiard-room above it, connected by a long passage with the main hall (in the centre of the picture). The dungeon, to the north, goes down perpendicularly about thirty feet, and must have been a pleasant place to spend a week-end in during the month of January in the eleventh century. The oldest date actually carved in the old red sandstone of the library wall is 1525, but the castle was a very much older place, repaired at that date. In the library are four heads carved in the old red sandstone, said to represent a murdered child, his parents, *and the murderer*, which I always thought a delightfully mediæval touch.

At Forglen are none of these mediæval memories, but modern comfort, which some prefer to gargoyles. Among these should certainly be numbered the former Lady Abercromby, formerly a strenuous social worker among the rich, and re-married to an Englishman (Lord Northbrooke) since the death of Sir Robert, who was a martyr to insomnia.

Hatton and Craigston Castles are respectively south and north of us at little distance. Annie Duff of Hatton, sweet, bronze-haired creature, was one of my earliest flirts when I was about twelve, and she and Miss Urquhart of Meldrum some years my senior. Her early death was regretted by the whole countryside.

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOOL, SALMON, POETRY

Song of the Stewart's—Lochiel—Prince Charlie—Dotheboys-and-Parents House—My first Fight—Stag Beetles—My big Salmon—Golden Minutes at Whipps Cross—Playing the Game—Woodcote House—*Tom Brown's Schooldays*.

THE north-east coast of Scotland played a very important part in the history of Scotland, but that was very many years ago, in the days of Bruce and the Red Comyn (now written Cumming). The latter ruled this district in the thirteenth century and, unfortunately for themselves, fell out with the powerful family of Bruce, who harried Buchan (a part of Aberdeenshire), with results that were visible for centuries. This, however, is not the place to dwell upon the terrible and interesting annals of the north or upon the Battle of Harlaw, fought in the fourteenth century, about fifty miles from Delgaty, near Aberdeen, where the wild highland clans were finally defeated by the lowlanders. It was really one mode of civilization against another. I have touched upon the subject elsewhere in the *Prelude to the Song of the Stewarts*, which was originally published in two editions, one for the Stewart Society, and is now out of print; but I hope it will be reprinted.

In this connection and from the anecdotal viewpoint may, however, be mentioned one of the two occasions when my imagination has done its worst whilst I slept. Would that they were more frequent ! I would willingly

sleep a month to wake up with a lyric, as it were, ready-made in my brain. But the mood refuses to be induced and is no doubt dependent upon a peculiar collocation of circumstances which are rarely found in equipoise.

I had been wandering about the Western Highlands, and at the request of Mrs. Cameron Head of Inverailort, had consented to pass a couple of nights beneath her roof. This is the heart of the "Prince Charlie" country, for it was here he landed with his forlorn band of half-a-dozen outlaws, and by the magic of his personality and name, won over the chief of the Camerons (Lochiel), who promised to rally his clan. It was on this very hillside he waited anxiously all day until evening came, waited with sinking heart, for there was no sign of the clan or its chieftain. At the very last of the last, however, and as the sun was setting, the wild strains of the bagpipes were heard in the distance, and Lochiel, followed by all his men, came streaming, hundreds strong, across the rugged, heathery hill. How these hundreds grew to thousands and Prince Charlie marched upon and occupied Edinburgh are events that have been the theme of countless historians (headed by the greatest authority on the Jacobites, J. B. Blaikie, of Edinburgh, an admirable writer) and novelists galore.

Well, there I was at Inverailort, plumped down in the middle of a not very exhilarating country-house party—I remember Lord and Lady Sligo as purple patches!—in which were several young ladies more or less attractive. On the second and last night of my visit I was attacked in front and rear with birthday-books and requests that I would write original poems in them. To oblige the first-comer I did write five or

six original lines which I hope have entirely disappeared from the face of creation and was about to retire to rest, as I had to rise at 5.30 to catch a seven o'clock train in the morning, when a Miss Mackenzie, whom I had not previously identified with the Camerons, appeared with her book. I was rather taken aback and could think of nothing much to the point, so suggested writing out a poem of Verlaine's that I knew by heart. This offer was accepted, but I noticed on its completion that the owner of the volume was rather disappointed. Mrs. Head told me, as I was bidding her good-night and thanking her for the (invariably) delightful visit, that the Miss Mackenzie in question was a granddaughter of a former chief of the Clan Cameron and a direct descendant of the chief who has led his followers to join Prince Charlie. I remember going to bed greatly repenting that I had not been able to think of anything original to write in her book, seeing that I intended to write the *Song of the Stewarts* descriptive of the long and splendid rule of the dynasty which closed in so tragically, so romantically with the battles of the '45. I tossed about for a few minutes, but was very tired after a long day on the hill and soon fell into a sound sleep. Suddenly I awoke, contrary to all my usual habits; it was pitch dark, and when I struck a light my watch said 3 a.m. In my head was coursing the lilt of a new poem, which I hastily scribbled down and then immediately fell asleep again until I was awakened by my servant at 5.30. I remember leaving it with the butler to be placed upon Miss Mackenzie's plate at breakfast that morning. The poem has been several times set to music, but I think the best setting has been that of my father. Here is the poem :

## A STIRRUP-CUP

Lady whose ancestor  
Fought for Prince Charlie,  
Met once and nevermore,  
No time for parley !  
Yet drink a glass with me  
Over the water :  
Memories pass to me,  
Chieftain's Granddaughter !  
" Say, will he come again ? "  
Nay, Lady, never.  
" Say, will he never reign ? "  
Yea, Lady, ever.  
Yea, for the heart of us  
Follows Prince Charlie ;  
There's not a part of us  
Bows not as barley,  
Under the breeze that blew  
Up the Atlantic,  
Wafting the one, the true  
Prince, the romantic,  
Back to his native land  
Over the water :  
Here's to Prince Charlie and  
Lochiel's Granddaughter !

So much then for the nonce about the north of Scotland. Returning to my boyhood, I must mention that, although the benefits to be derived from an education in Scotland are, in my opinion, quite equal and possibly (for a Scottish boy) superior to an English education, my parents decided that my brother Percy and I should proceed to Aldin House, Slough, a preparatory school for Eton. Aldin House is still visible, with its Italian façade, from the windows of the Great Western just before one reaches Slough.

I believe it is or was lately a lunatic asylum ; but whether any of the former masters remained as permanent boarders after the pandemonium of the boys' school was closed, I have no intention of ascertaining.

What a monstrous and foolish tradition this is of the private school! Boys would be better taught at home until they go to Eton. A private school like Aldin House of my day might be described as Dotheboys-and-Parents Hall. The mother is done out of her children's society, the boys are done out of more or less everything, including education. I remember our mother coming to the school when first we went and earnestly begging Mrs. Hawtrey to be kind to us in the prim drawing-room with its Rubicon of a passage between the boys' part of the building and that reserved for the use of the head-master. She might as well have asked Queen Victoria, for we never saw Mrs. Hawtrey. I am quite certain that I should have learned twenty times as much at home and gone to Eton far better prepared than ever I was at Aldin House, had I remained at home in the charming society of my mother, who was quite miserable at losing us, and we, I think, were equally wretched at losing sight of her sweet face as she waved a tear-drenched adieu and entered the carriage that was to take her to Windsor.

Percy and I shared a big angle-room in the south-west corner of the building. We must have presented a quaint picture in our ill-fitting pepper-and-salt suits, the result of the village tailor's efforts, in marked contrast to the smart cut of most of the other small boys. We were partitioned off from two other boys, my old friend, now Colonel, Hugh Warrender, of the Grenadier Guards—friend through all these years—and Wurzdundas. Hugh, even at this early age, was an exquisite, but in later years achieved heights of sartorial perfection undreamed-of by most. I remember his once answering my inquiry as to his method by saying: "I drop in at my tailor's nearly every afternoon to try



on something, and damn the ass of a cutter, it's the only way of getting something fit to wear." Hugh is the type of the *dolce 'far niente* capable of throwing all the uncrumpled rose-leaves of life away, to sleep instead upon rocks, and to rise at dawn, as he proved during the war, in Palestine and elsewhere : a really distinguished soldier who will be vexed at being praised. My brother Percy had a pleasant time at Aldin House : he was a dreamy boy and developed into a yet dreamier youth, marrying for love and dying young with a couple of charming stories to his name. He was witty and amusing in congenial company, and would have perhaps produced some fine mature work had he been more fortunate in his choice of a wife. I shall always keep his little story of the *Priceless Orchid* among my favourite books. Our ways lay apart at Aldin House during the day, as I was a little above him in the school.

Mr. Edward Hawtrey, one of the masters, known as Beetle owing to his near-sightedness had, nevertheless, spied out my rather exceptional suit of pepper-and-salt with a dash of mustard, and I remember his advising me to be "as like the other boys as possible," eyeing my garments critically the while. Criticism was not confined, however, to Beetle Hawtrey, but several of the boys were not slow to condemn the sartorial efforts of the far north. Among these was a bright boy named Reeve, with smooth, auburn hair and very brown, staring eyes, whose seat was exactly behind mine in school. I was suddenly made aware of his critical disapproval by receiving a series of sharp kicks during the lesson. Turning round to expostulate, I was blamed for talking and received a bad mark. Immediately after school, in

my turn, I handed a "bad mark" to Master Reeve, somewhere in the region of the right eye. We were at once surrounded and separated by some bigger boys who were passing. They told us not to worry—we should have the honour of fighting it out behind the Pavilion the next day in the afternoon. My experience of the ring had been limited to boxing with my father's forefinger, which he would occasionally prod into my chest. Reeve's was an unknown quantity, but fortunately for me he turned out to be equally ignorant of the craft. We set about our battle with a very good will, and I can still see before me Reeve's blazing brown eyes and ruffled hair as we pommelled one another's countenances. After two pairs of (eventually) polychrome eyes and a good deal of bleeding at the nose on both sides, a draw was the verdict given by the bigger boys who had arranged the little exhibition, carried out with perfect tact and good (though rather painful) feeling. Reeve and I made friends afterwards, as is so often the case in schools, and I found that my peculiar garments no longer met with open criticism. I never fought again at Hawtrey's—and I changed my tailor.

Here, as elsewhere, the classes were far too large to be managed efficiently, and boys followed more or less their own desires. I being naturally studious, managed, however, to bring home the prizes for French, for History, and for Latin. I still possess *Hypatia*, in red calf (for Classical Lore), Farrer's *Language and Languages* (for French), and *The Roman and the Teuton* (History), in lemon and green, as relics of those early days. My family, to my surprise, did not seem greatly impressed by my success, which, to childish eyes, seemed important, and I remember

foolishly deciding that work unappreciated was not worth while; an unfortunate decision only too faithfully carried out, both at Eton and Oxford, which for me were one long revel, broken with exclamations of surprise, when the sticks of the fireworks fell back from the sky upon my head. But fireworks have their beauty, and frolic is not all dead loss, as some would have us believe.

There were moments at Hawtrey's when the whole school throbbed in harmony and acted in unison. The chief of these were not the weekly readings out of places in class, rewards and punishments, nor the awful adjurations to be good hurled hebdomadally at us from the pulpit. Rather were they those of the school fights and the appearance of the *Stag Beetle*. These great beetles used drowsily to hum their way across the playground, during the summer time, at an altitude of about twenty feet, followed by volleys of bats, balls, caps, stumps—anything that came handy. The whole school was out to capture the invader, and it was rarely that one of these beetles made its escape. Whoever eventually caught or brought it down was bound to bring it to the captain of the cricket Eleven, who adjudged the prize to that one among us who (in the opinion of the others) least deserved it. Once I was the recipient and carefully carried my treasure to my bedroom, where I placed it in the top left-hand drawer of my chest. Alas, that I had not chosen the right, for the comely auburn-locked Bertha Buxton, matron and my first love, had a way of depositing in that receptacle, during the morning, a delicately buttered roll from the head-master's table. These I used secretly to consume (sharing with Percy) and, unknown to him and to all the rest of the world, bestow, in return,

ardent kisses of the dawn. What was poor Bertha's astonishment on this occasion, when, on opening the said drawer, roll in hand, an enormous beetle spread its wings and buzzed into her face. She told me she had nearly fallen down in a faint—and thus risked discovery in the act of conveying the illicit roll (*our* rolls and cake were of greatly inferior quality). It took many kisses and semi-sincere promises of reform in the matter of preferring beetles to Bertha, before the longed-for stream of rolls began again to flow. Roll "bagging" at breakfast was an important feature of our training at Aldin House. This occurred only when some master, whose seat was at the top of one of the long tables (we were 150 boys), did not appear for breakfast. The boy within nearest reach of his superiors' roll was expected to "bag" and divide it among about twenty urchins, craving for something more palatable than the Sahara of dry bread and tasteless stodge, of which the head-master and Mrs. Hawtrey used to nibble a very small portion once a week and declare to be excellent. I must say that I felt rather mean as I swallowed a piece of the precious roll about the size of a florin and thought of the whole one that was (probably) awaiting my attention when I could slip away to our room.

At Hawtrey's I made one friend, Phillips, whom I meet at intervals of about a decade—we quite lately met in Ebury Street and I found him unchanged. Phillips taught me to drive tandem later on when I was at a tutor's at Folkestone. He encouraged me to ride, an accomplishment which I had acquired upon the Shetland, Fairy, and upon the Orkney, Jet, at home, but had not carried further. This was of use to me later when I hunted occasionally for a brief period, with astonishing

success as regards keeping my seat in difficulties, and the tandem-driving enabled me to pilot the coach to St. Germain on the great occasion to which I shall later refer.

None of the masters at Hawtrey's were sympathetic. Old Hawtrey's three sons, Jack (grim and sallow), Edward (short-sighted and cricketing), George (squat and menacing), all taught in the school, and Charles was, I believe, also to have done so, had he not (wisely) preferred a more exciting existence on the stage, to the great benefit of theatre-goers. George was also later on an actor, and I saw him give at least one fine performance.

My complete cessation of interest in school-work suggested to my parents the advisability of transferring me to Mr. Ninde's school at Woodcote House, near Reading, prior to Eton. A master at Hawtrey's discovered that I was about to flit elsewhere, and had the doubtful taste to interpellate me on the subject in the middle of his class. He was a little red-haired, moustachioed man, ultra emphatic and fond of inscribing formulæ upon the blackboard, but singularly incapable of transferring them thence to the memory of his pupils. On the conclusion of his sarcastic remarks, I had the pluck to say: "They don't grow carrots at Woodcote." This got me a punishment, which I completed with entire satisfaction and left Aldin House after two years' dalliance.

In the holidays I was mostly up at Delgaty, and began my collection of the birds of Aberdeenshire, which contains some specimens considered worth mentioning in the special treatises. Such, for instance, are the Pied Flycatcher, the Buzzard, the Common Sandpiper (once common), the Tufted Duck, the Slavonian Grebe.

I have always been fond of natural history sport rather than sport in the sense of formal shooting—wandering about with a gun or a contemplative fishing-rod rather than attending cover-shoots. As a boy, however, I did some careful fishing of the Deveron in the spring-time with the March Brown, and later in the year, the Governor ; the Professor and the Coachman were names of my favourite flies. My most successful day with the trout was at Dunlugas in 1882—144 trout, weighing 54 lbs. The average size was small, especially as there was one among the 144 of  $2\frac{3}{8}$  lb. weight. Had I made an earlier start the bag would have been fifty heavier in numbers at least. My best with salmon was one of thirty pounds in the Deveron at the bend in the Embankment Pool. On two other occasions I got four, the biggest about 25 lbs. The thirty-pounder also provided the most excitement of any salmon I have caught, though certain frogs in the south of France and the goldfish in old Mr. David Morgan's pond at Whipps Cross when I was a very small boy, were quite as exciting to land. The salmon in question took me close into the bank. I was using a medium Childers whose dull yellow has often with me proved the winning lure. The water was high and slightly discoloured, and I was trying a new make of cast known as the Hercules. Hercules was, fortunately, its nature as well as its name on this occasion, for the fish, after rushing up and down stream several times, went straight away to a deep creek far away on the other side of the pool, where, as I knew, there were some big sunken beech-tree branches. I held on with all my might trying to turn him, but he was still too strong (he had been on about half an hour) and got among them. Suddenly the tug-tugging at the line ceased and my

heart sank as I felt the dead weight of what must be a branch. I turned to the keeper Gallon; and said with a sinking heart: "He's off, I think." But I still held on tight and the heavy salmon-rod was bent nearly double as an immense branch of beech-tree rose to the surface from the mud of the creek in which it had been imbedded. The small twigs must have covered many yards as they pricked the calm surface of the water, the thick arm round which my line was entangled remaining submerged. Suddenly, from the very centre of this miniature floating forest, a magnificent salmon sprang up his full length of solid silver—sprang and disappeared. A moment after, I again felt the heavy tugging of the fish. What had happened was quite clear. He had made one twist of the line round the sunken beech-bough and his direct pulling on it, plus mine, must have dragged it out of the mud. The line was prevented from breaking by the yielding of the bough as it was slowly raised. His triumphant leap the opposite way over the branch had been his undoing, for I managed to prevent his getting back into the creek and killed him half an hour afterwards. He weighed  $29\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. when we got him back to Delgaty, but I have always added half a pound, as fish are said to lose weight when they have been some hours out of the water. The reader, however, is quite welcome to the odd half pound if he will, but he must leave me the remaining  $29\frac{1}{2}$ !

I shall refer later to the fascinating sport of frog-fishing, but may just mention here my day with the goldfish at Whipps Cross. Old Mr. David Morgan was my grandfather's brother—a very kindly, dark, bright-eyed old gentleman, with his black skull-

cap and velvet jacket. The day we went over to luncheon from Lancaster Gate he gave me some fine birds for my collection, a Pine Grosbeak, a Raven and a Waxwing, all of them on the British list, though these specimens are probably of Siberian origin. After luncheon I was given a line and a small toy fishing-rod and told I might go and fish for the goldfish with a crooked pin while my elders conversed. Although still quite a little boy I was already a minor brother of the angle, for I had caught a good many trout at Delgaty and knew how to set systematically about the matter. I was quite good and quiet for about an hour, while my elders strolled up and down, eventually approaching the pond. I shall always remember old Mr. Morgan's rather sceptical inquiry as to how many fish I had caught. "Please, I think I have caught them *all*," came the reply in piping treble, and what was the old gentleman's astonishment when he saw the *whole contents* of his fair-sized pond—about forty good-sized goldfish—neatly arranged in three rows on the bank, all of them stone dead. I had not been told to put them back, and my innocent inquiry as to whether I might have some for tea was that of the labourer worthy his hire, though it "put the lid on it," as they say nowadays.

I had the greatest fun one day in April when wading in the Dunlugas stretch, already mentioned, just below the pool known as the Mausoleum, for I spied a kelt salmon of about 10 lbs. lying at the tail of some green weeds close to the rocks in the centre of the river. The sun was shining brightly, and I could not resist the temptation of wading to the bank, putting down the trout-rod, and returning to try and catch the old chap by the tail. Neil



McLaren, the faithful keeper, was drowsing on the bank. The stream ran quite smoothly at the tail of a rock over the mass of green weeds, decorated with small white blossoms not quite as big as daisies. I could see every stone on the bottom and the fish's dark back and languid tail as I carefully crept up-stream to grapple with him. I was about up to my middle. With every precaution I approached my hands from opposite sides to the part just above the junction of tail and body. Now's the moment!—and I gripped him fast. In one flash I was drenched to the skin, as the salmon, terror-stricken, leapt about like a mad thing while I clung firmly to his tail. The struggle lasted about half a minute and then he was free, jumping his own height in the water over and over again, all over the deep pool just above, while I was rocking with laughter in the middle of the river, partly at my water-and-sunlight escapade and partly at Niel, who had been roused from his siesta by hearing the fish plunging about, and was now running up and down the pool shouting to me: "See at the running fish, Master Douglas, see at the running fish." That old kelt certainly played the part of a fresh-run fish to perfection—he entered into the spirit of the game, rather like Lady Horner's victims.

This game, as she explained it to me and I practised it, only requires two players—you and your friend on your way anywhere by train. Everybody who enters the carriage joins *ipso facto* in the game just like my salmon, *without knowing it*. The rules are simple. You must not address any remark directly to anybody but your fellow-player, but you may say anything to him (or her) which touches the fibre of generosity or that passion for aiding fellow-travellers which is shared, I believe, even by assassins on a tedious

journey. Every time you indirectly elicit a remark from a fellow-traveller you *score one*. Thus, as the Great Western non-stop to Plymouth train whizzes past Slough one remarks to one's friend: "Did you notice, my dear, in the A.B.C., when we were due at Oxford?" An elderly gentleman in the corner seat will almost certainly say: "I fear, sir, we do not stop at Oxford at all: this train runs right through to Plymouth." That is one to A, but B would get even in a moment or two with: "I quite thought this was a smoking-carriage, but I see it isn't." "I've no objection to smoking" would certainly come from the same corner. Placing one hand in the pocket A will extract a cigarette, but of course, find no match. A youth opposite will tender one that he had just used to light up with himself, with a polite "May I offer you a light?" Two to B. You must always forget your matches—and also to buy the paper, for one of you certainly will extract the *Times* and the *Lady's Pictorial* from some kind-hearted privy councillor or criminal, especially if the fellow-player were a lady—one to her. Much can be gained rather unfairly by the fair sex by simply gazing at the window fixedly, whether open or shut. Someone masculine is almost certain to give her an easy point by pulling the strap up or down. There are all sorts of refinements to this game, as those will find who play it. Only you must of course keep your countenances, so that other players may leave you with tranquil minds in the belief that they have been "kind and helpful," and "playing the game," as they say—so different from *your* game!

The brief period spent at Woodcote House school enabled me to take a fairly good place at Eton—upper

fourth form—and I am sorry to say that my brother Percy did not accompany me there, but was sent to Radley, where he was not, I believe, very happy.

Woodcote House stands on high ground about five miles from Reading, and presents all the aspects of a country-house in its own grounds. Mrs. Ninde was a singularly handsome and attractive person, quite different from Mrs. Hawtrey in her lack of pomposity and in the interest she took in the boys. My brief sojourn at Woodcote was more like a visit, so pleasant did I find the boys and the masters. Mr. Ninde was small, dark and energetic, a handsome, determined man. Exceptions were made in my favour as it was rather a feather in the cap of Woodcote to have attracted a boy from Aldin House. Mr. Ninde gave me especial attention and I could not have gone to a more satisfactory school. The food was better than at Aldin House, and at Woodcote we were allowed to have hampers from home, which greatly added to the popularity of those who, like myself, possessed affectionate and generous parents. I can still quite clearly see the comfortable dining-room, the lofty square of the main schoolroom, and the rows of beds in the dormitories—for we all slept in dormitories and not in cubicles as at Aldin House. I had one or two almost friendly scraps with the bigger boys, Buckhurst and Robinson, who at first rather resented an alien intrusion from above, as it were, into the fifth form. I also discovered, for the first time, the pleasures of patronage in the admiration inspired in a boy of loftier height than myself either at the appearance of an immense hamper from Delgaty, or at the prospect of my speedily going to Eton, or owing to a combination of these and other external qualities. He used to follow in my wake loudly

applauding all I said, and I remember his suggesting that some sort of gift should be presented to me by the school on my departure !

Another little item may be added to the list of my indebtedness to Woodcote : it enabled me to read *Tom Brown's Schooldays* with far greater appreciation, for Aldin House and Eton were in an altogether different key. Woodcote was an improved edition of the older fashioned schools, less worldly and with a more intense local life. Every morsel of energy was taken up with living in the tense atmosphere of Woodcote. The school came first, second and third, whereas at Aldin House other interests chipped in, and Eton, though a world unto itself in one sense, was so closely linked and knitted up with the great world, that one stepped from the one into the other without experiencing much sense of change.

### CHAPTER III

#### ETON

Arrival—From Lock's to Durnford's—P. J. de Paravicini—Eton "Swagger"  
—"Passing" in Swimming at Cuckoo Weir—Football "Colours"  
Won—*Don Juan* Confiscated—Romps.

MANY volumes have been devoted to Eton life, and I shall dwell on none of the obvious things such as the Eton and Harrow, 4th of June, etc. in these Adventures, for the place filled by those few years is necessarily not very large. But there can be no doubt that Eton has a *cachet* of its own in experience, and contrives to stand out in the perspective of memory like a cathedral over against a popular city. Not that there was much of the cloistered life in the Eton of my day in the early 'eighties. I made my debut, not at Walter Durnford's house, but at Lock's, where I spent my first half, somewhat awed by Mr. Lock's lofty forehead and reputation for mathematical acquirements. But Lock's meant merely bed and breakfast : work was done chiefly at my tutor's almost next door, that house of red brick facing the Old Schools. The next half I was accorded a very tiny room on the third floor at Walter Durnford's and made acquaintance with the members of that very successful house. I was still somewhat awed by the portentous greatness of Morris, the captain of the house, in his "stick-ups" and white tie ; a solemn youth as I see him now, with his six or seven fags to get his breakfast. Harry Cust, captain of the Oppidans, impressed me with great admiration

in my early Eton days as he strode up the Chapel aisle at the head of sixth form, a cherub with a touch of the Emperor Commodus. I was often to meet him in the far future as Editor of the *Pall Mall*, etc. But even *his* greatness underwent a momentary cloud when P. J. de Paravicini, captain of the Eleven, medium height, dark haired, oval faced, reeled slowly ("awful swagger") up the centre of the road in his light-blue cap and white cricketing flannels (ordinary mortals wore grey ones), or in his perfect tall hat poised at the back of the head (this was only permitted to the really great), in his brown-top boots (brown tops as above), his "lush" blue, "turned up" trousers (as above), his tail-coat bound with braid (braid as above), lofty stick-up collars (as above). He only died the other day and I am always glad that we never met in after life. He was imperial—far too great, while I was a small lower boy, even to know of my existence, but we might have met in after life: it would have been like playing billiards with the Pope to have played cricket with "P. J." In fact, I am sure the late Supreme Pontiff (a fair billiard player) could never inspire me with awe and admiration equal to that which I felt for "Para" as we small fry dared affectionately to call him. Probably even the Pope and the Grand Lama have their short names: indeed it must be so, when certainly "Para" had his.

Of course there are twelve boys in the Eleven, plus one or two with a foot in it—nine in the Eight—and so on illogically, but rarely does it happen that more than one or two individuals in a decade rise to the altitudes of a Paravicini. Perhaps it was his Italian blood that enabled him so perfectly to play the part of lord of all he surveyed. Perhaps the spirit that makes the small

boy so faithful an enthusiast for his own ideal burned particularly strongly in me, but I believe that the majority of those who were then at Eton will admit—that “Para” was a paragon.

Eton, the most aristocratic of schools, had the most republican spirit—nothing that came from without to support a reputation had any effect in maintaining it there. People counted for just what they were worth in school values—the bookish element being at a discount. This was perhaps rather unfortunate for me in view of later developments, as I have had to do a great deal of work since leaving school, college and diplomacy, in order to catch up with the average educated person. We were gorgeously Homeric at Eton in my time. Achilles, Ulysses, Ajax, Agamemnon, each had his tent and was surrounded with his adherents. The mimic battles that we fought with Trojan Harrow had an artistic finish about them built up from boyish enthusiasms and unequalled in after days.

Cricket was never one of my games, though I was a good catch at point, so I became a “wet bob,” and tried to pass in swimming that first summer half at Durnford’s. Three masters used to sit in conclave, blue jacketed and brass buttoned, for all the world like genuine skippers, in a punt at Cuckoo Wier, where we small boys bathed. We had to jump in and swim about according to instructions, usually ending with the command: “Take your hair out of your eyes.” This could not be conveniently done with both hands, as was expected, without “treading water,” so that the boy who had not acquired that accomplishment usually sank to the bottom in the attempt, to the huge amusement of the crowded lawn. Warre, Sydney James, Marindin and my own tutor and house-

master, Walter Durnford, twice sat in judgment upon me before I "passed." At last I did so. Few boys, I believe, ever got through this swimming ordeal at the first attempt. I was now free of the river and might even attempt to go in an "outrigger," which at once overturns if you let go the sculls. This I immediately did, though my experience in rowing had hitherto been confined to paddling about the lake at Delgaty in one of a pair of enormous flat-bottomed fishing-boats that made the heaviest punt look like a dry beech leaf. How, at my first attempt, I managed to let go both sculls just below Windsor Bridge, when the river was in flood, and catch them again without swamping is one of the problems that make me still wonder and echo that admirable adage: "*De l'audace, de l'audace et toujours de l'audace.*" Paralleled once only in latter experience by the feat of remaining in the saddle during a whole day's hunting on a Pytchley Crick Wednesday—a first attempt this too, at hunting, during which an old grey horse of poor Johnny Clayton's, with a mouth of iron and an exhaustive (and exhausting) knowledge of the country, had a capital day to hounds, and his rider certainly an exciting one.

The Brocas and its boats, however, had less charms for me than the football field, where I was speedily at home at the Eton game. This game differs from Rugby and Association by the disposition of the field, the mode of starting the game, and the scoring. We "formed down," for the "bully" in the middle of the field, six of the team on either side, post half posts with their "back-ups," the arms of the one side resting upon the necks of their opponents. The "corners" put the ball into the passage we thus formed between



the feet of the posts, and the shoving and kicking began. I had quite a turn of speed in those days, and in spite of a regime of pine-apple and green chartreuse, always found I had "wind" enough to stay the hour's struggle. I played "corner" a good deal in "house" games and matches and got my "colours" a year before any of the boys of my time, except St. John Meyrick, who was killed in the Boer War. I shall always remember the surprise of seeing my door open, just after a match against Mitchell's, and Baillie's head appear: "Ainslie, you played very well to-day; you may have your colours." This meant that I might wear the cap and shirt of grey and cerise with a thin black dividing line between the two, and at once raised me from the position of one of the not important smaller boys to the society of the great!

Baillie (now Lord Glenusk), who gave me my colours, was a beautiful football player with so nice a sense of balance, so quick a judgment and so accurate an eye that he forced a rouge (three rouges to a goal) by running the ball down the line in the final match of the House Football Cup, which we won (kicking it against one of the opposing Warre's side and touching it behind the line) and so saving what looked like a certain tie—nothing to nothing—after an hour's strenuous play. I was post on that occasion and it was no light post, so much so that my heart gave signs of revolt and it was thought better that I should not play in the "field," for which I had been "picked up."

Of all the games I have played, Eton football has always seemed to me the best, and I wish that I had been able to continue it. I remember that Durnford used often to appear in the house game, in which we joined with Evans's and Ainger's; but he was

apt to hover in the offing and to play rather with his tongue than his toes, padding about backward and forward like a red-wattled turkey-cock and clucking out encouragement or interperation, as the occasion suggested.

He used also to do a sort of turkey-trot up and downstairs of an evening in his house, just as we were retiring to rest. I found this rather tiresome, as it was one of the few moments of the day when one could open a book to read. I recollect his once confiscating Byron's *Don Juan*, which I had brought from home and was reading when he suddenly pounced upon me. This was the only occasion I ever knew him to take an interest in poetry. I had also a copy of Shelley's poems, which I thought it safer to present to the house library. There was some discussions as to whether it was suitable, and I remember the remark being made that Ainslie would be the only one to read it. One boy, in a speech at another house (Marindin's), declared that all boys had liked Eton so far as he knew with the exception of "a boy called Shelley." So much for literature in the Eton of the 'eighties, though there may have been houses less Philistine than Durnford's.

We made up for it, however, with romps and escapades of all sorts in which, as a small boy, I was a ringleader. One fascinating game consisted in supplying one boy out of about ten or more with a squirt full of ink and water, and shutting the door of a small room in which the lights were extinguished. The game consisted in the boy with the squirt catching one of the others and squirting the liquid down his back under his collar. The victim then became, in his turn, pursuer. The effect upon the furniture

and fittings of the rooms selected for this game was remarkable. The table in the centre was smashed almost at once as it generally covered two or three boys, determined not to be squirted, who clung pertinaciously to its legs. Crockery was swept off the mantelpiece and came crashing to the ground in picturesque fragments. Ink and water everywhere, as the jug and basin were generally broken pretty early in the day. The game became very popular in the house and we had to limit the number of participants. Also the authorities were not slow in detecting the extraordinary tendency of the furniture to deteriorate in certain rooms, but they did not discover the game while it was in full swing in my room or Bowater Vernon's, Clinton's, Meyrick's, Coventry's or Lascelles's, as we had look-outs posted down the passage and staircase, and at the slightest hint stopped the scrimmage, struck a light, and were deeply studious of Cæsar's Gallic War (nothing to our scrimmage) or Herodotus, which we carried in our pockets. St. John Coventry had a most guileless face, with his mop of fair hair and blue eyes, and I remember his doing spokesman for us in a voice of injured innocence justly pained at Durnford's suspicions. We sat round in a circle upon quaking chairs, calm and studious, having but a second before been struggling wildly in an inchoate mass. It was against the rules of the game to utter any loud sound which might lead to detection, so during the scrimmage nothing was audible but gulps and grunts of discomfort and the creaking and cracking of furniture, save when there was a fall of crockery, which we had to risk.

We played another variety of this game at evening prayers, read by Durnford at the end of the crimson-clothed dining-room table, along which ran two parallel

benches upon which we sat or rested our arms as we knelt. We used to catch hold of one another's hands under the table and then yo ! heave ho ! pull devil, pull baker—the heavy table creaked and groaned as it slowly rose up in the air, inch by grudging inch. Now and then there was an awful pause in the reading, which was fortunately conducted in stentorian tones, and then the table would hastily return to the ground with a bump. The voice would again take up the reading and again the table would rise and again fall suddenly. This was a most exciting pursuit and we used to have regular matches with teams on either side of the table. The wonder was that nothing ever came of it, but so far as I remember no reproof was administered.

Not content with playing "post" for the house in the "bully" at football during the afternoon, submerged with the ball beneath a surging mob of muddled athletes, like a hedgehog rolled up, in the evening, during the winter half, I used often to defy some ten or twelve stalwarts to enter my room, hurling insults and Grammars and Gradus ad Parnassum at their heads. A stampede would ensue: I would rush down the passage and throw myself upon the floor, back to the door and feet against boot-box, which in its turn was in contact with the "burry" (bureau), then the clothes-chest, then the wall. A strong line of defence ! They used to "form up" in the room opposite and then come on, treading in time: one two, one two, then, *bang* against the door with the leader's shoulder. I was never forced out of my position, but the door developed a large crack in the centre. This assault and battering would be repeated two or three times, after which I used to execute my favourite manœuvre of rising very

quietly from the floor and standing behind the door with a big jug of water. On they came, crashing down and falling over one another head foremost on the floor and passage, while I damped their ardour with a cold douche, then leapt on top of the struggling mass with shouts of triumph. Any article of furniture in the room as yet unbroken was, of course, smashed in pieces during these manœuvres.

## CHAPTER IV

### ETON AND OXFORD

Escalading the Tower—A Tragedy of Good Health—Mousing—A Martinet—Balliol—The Master Examined—Enter Arthur Bouchier—Jowett and the Old Vic.

BUT the most exciting times, as we grew bigger, were excursions to the Castle Hotel, Windsor, and return by escalade after lock-up. St. John Coventry, St. John Meyrick, Francis Pelham-Clinton and I were the first to discover a way out of Durnford's house by one of the windows, with a drop of only about five feet into the stone-flagged entrance-passage. The Castle, the White Hart and indeed all hotels and several streets of Windsor were out of bounds, so we had to use great circumspection as to our goings-in and comings-out. There was a very sporting young billiard-marker who used to survey the street for us prior to our appearance in it, and I have often rushed back to cover when he dropped the signal handkerchief. Brandies and sodas, cigars and cigarettes made us men of the world for a brief period between schools. We used to play pool and billiards with the townfolk, and Coventry more than held his own. He was a natural player, and I remember on one occasion when the game was called Mr. Coventry twenty—Mr. Smith forty-eight—in a game of fifty—that Marshall, the marker, backed Coventry, who duly rolled up with his thirty break.

We should all have been expelled if we had been

caught, and this knowledge added a fearful joy to our adventures in Windsor. Peril was by no means over at night when we left the Castle : we had to get into the house without arousing suspicions.

I remember one night the three of us, Coventry, Meyrick and myself, arrived back from the Castle at about tea-time, in mid-winter. We had long before given elaborate instructions to young Guthrie, a lower boy who occupied the room with the window of entrance, that he was to open the moment he heard pebbles being thrown against it, under threats of vengeance dire if he failed to be prompt. On this occasion we threw up the pebbles and waited with confidence for the window to be opened, as we saw there was a light in the room and had no doubt it was occupied. To our surprise it remained closed, so we renewed the rain of pebbles. At length it was very slowly raised an inch or two, and Meyrick, a strapping lad six feet tall, clambered up first from the ledge upon which we three were poised, and with a vigorous push thrust it wide open and plunged out of the black night into the centre of the room, followed by Coventry and myself, with imprecations on the head of young Guthrie, who had thus delayed our return and made us run great risk of detection. "What the devil do you mean by not opening the window at once?" came as in one breath from three stalwarts in tall hats and white ties, blinking in the bright light of two lamps, and looking everywhere for the diminutive culprit. At last a very faint, small voice came from behind a screen : "I'm very sorry ; my brother is getting tea and I thought you were burglars ;" and we saw the prettiest of pretty little girls, like *Dulcie* in *Vice Versa*, crouching down in terror fast melting into admiration

for our audacity. Of course we apologized humbly, and Coventry, one of whose fags Guthrie was, let him off fagging for the rest of the half. Dulcie was delighted with the adventure, and her brother, who was a regular sport, joined our card club in the High Street when he got into Fifth Form. This club was quite unique of its sort and was founded by myself, Ednam, Royston, R. T. Ellison, F. Pelham-Clinton and a few others who were mostly not members of Durnford's. Here we elderly gentlemen of seventeen could enjoy our rubbers in peace and quiet, a cigar and brandy-and-soda at our sides, and the bright, coloured pasteboards, with their bold bad kings of hearts and clubs to symbolize our enterprise. It was indeed a perilously situated resort this little club, consisting of a couple of back rooms over a fruiterer's on the left, past Barnes Pool Bridge. Masters were, of course, constantly passing to and fro, and stories of our exploits got about in the school; for this secret was not so well kept as that of the Castle billiards, since our members were recruited from other houses besides Durnford's. I remember how we used to enjoy ourselves, and how we used to laugh at one of our members who insisted upon bringing in a rope ladder to be used by the members of the club in case the house were attacked from the front. Nothing, however, transpired in my time so far as the beaks were concerned, though a fellow member of the club told me only the other day, when we were talking over old times, that when he was leaving Eton he had been told by his house-master that he knew about the club, but had thought better to say nothing. Tell that to the Marines, or if the house-master did know, then it was his duty to inform the authorities.

This mention of the rope-ladder reminds me of an



adventure that occurred to a good friend of mine at a much later date—Lyon of the Grenadier Guards. He had made a biggish bet with some brother officers that he would climb into the Tower of London between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. in the morning, when, of course, every entrance was bolted and barred. He was off duty on the night in question and consequently had no business there at all. Of course it was understood that neither side was to do anything to disturb the ordinary course of events. Lyon presented himself in due course, about 2 a.m., at the especial point of the pile which he had studied with a view to escalade and began his careful, but perilous ascent. After about half an hour's efforts he had raised himself with bleeding finger-tips to just below the level of the first parapet. He heard the heavy tramp tramp of the sentry as he stalked to and fro. Waiting until the steps seemed to be at the remotest point from his position, he pulled himself up the remaining couple of feet and was just scrambling over when he saw a bayonet about an inch from his nose, and a stentorian voice shouted: "'Alt! Who goes there?" Lyon, utterly reckless with exhaustion, but determined to win his bet, was then heard to ejaculate: "Don't be a d——d fool my good fellow, but pull me up and I'll give you a fiver."

Poor Lyon! He was a real sport and had and gave his friends a splendid time, while the Guards enjoyed many little privileges of which I am told they have since been deprived. He was a regular sybarite and used frequently to appear on parade after a "white" night, as indeed did also my oldest and best Eton friend, Captain St. John Coventry, who was in the same battalion. Lyon was really wonderful considering the

frail health which he "enjoyed." He inherited, I believe, a capital of about £150,000, and I remember Coventry's telling me that Lyon's doctor had informed him about the same time that a couple of years was all he could expect of life. His lungs and his heart were in a deplorable condition according to this Æsculap. Lyon took the doctor at his word, and decided at least to have a good time. He decided that he and his capital should live and die together, and consequently started expenditure at the rate of £75,000 a year. The first year passed pleasantly enough between Ascot, Epsom, Newmarket, Paris, Monte Carlo (he had left the regiment). He had got through some months of the next year and rather over £100,000 of capital when he found himself menaced with signs of good health. He did his best with bouquets and stage-doors and suppers and all-night sittings at cards, but all was of no avail. His health continued steadily to improve in the most disquieting manner and I remember lunching with him at the old Bristol while he detailed his symptoms. What was to be done? His spare, ascetic form shook with emotion as he poured the foaming Pommery, with an all too steady hand, into my tumbler. I suggested a visit to the home circle—could nothing be done by the wrath of a *père noble* to undermine the nervous system? A course of well-conducted dinner-parties, with country neighbours, stiffened with bazaars and a little pew-work with the collecting plate? A lenient smile, a pleasant twinkle of the eye—it was the *père noble's* capital that he had inherited. He had no living relations, no country place and therefore no country neighbours. We finished luncheon, I remember, in the delightful society of Kate Vaughan, who, like the writer, had a standing invitation to drop in to a champagne lunch.

I lost sight of him for some years until we chanced upon one another at Monte Carlo, where I was on my way to Italy. There he was : the Lyon of the present, just as frail as the Lyon of the past, but apparently endowed with perpetual youth, for he had not visibly changed in any respect, but looked just as wistful, just as ascetic as any other hard-working *viveur*. I asked him to dine that night at the Paris and he came. He told me the sad story of his robust health : at the end of the second year the £150,000 capital had duly died of consumption—not so its former owner—on the contrary he was left with an excellent appetite and ultra expensive tastes, without the means to gratify either. I sympathized discreetly and then came a little bit of comedy, half pathetic, half humorous, which often accompanied the doings of Lyon. He put his hand in the pocket of his dinner-jacket and from a hermitically sealed glass tube produced a cigar : “It’s all I have now to offer : it’s a very good cigar I believe—smoke it on your way to Italy—and put not thy trust in doctors.” He waved his hand as he strolled away in the starry perfumed dusk of Monte Carlo. Some months later I read of his death in the papers. Harley Street had been out in its calculation about ten years.

Eton, with all its faults, is a most wonderful institution, and if the royal dictum : “Institutions corrupt men,” be true, then all I can say is that institutions such as Eton are excellent for boys. Having said so much, let us proceed to find the sunspots. These adventures purposely avoid wordy discussions of all sorts and I am not going to be led into a pamphlet on our upper-class educational system. I merely state facts. In my day, we were certainly

worse taught than the boys at the middle-class schools, and compared with continental education, the system was absurdly inadequate. I much doubt if it be possible to teach forty noisy boys in one class. Some of our masters inspired awe and kept physical but not mental order, while many were only imperfectly in control of the back benches, and some altogether lacked *prestige* and failed entirely. One master in particular, who taught French, was so obviously incapable of maintaining discipline that his division was reduced from forty to ten, but even these ten gave him more than enough to do. "If any of you young devils had a spark of generosity about you, you would desist from chattering when I am trying to explain this difficult passage to the two or three of you who are not incorrigibly idle." (Cries of "saps!" "scugs!") Thus Mr. Evergreen (I alter names here); but the logic of his appeal to the finer feelings of those he condemned as young devils was not apparent to us and the din continued. Another master whom I always pitied, while expiring with laughter at his adventures in education, was a fine scholar and editor of several Latin poets. He was very tender-hearted towards animals, and also extremely short-sighted. A thorough gentleman in his gold-rimmed spectacles, I can see him now peering into his Horace as he proceeded to give us a super-excellent version of one of the Odes. Meanwhile, however, strange events were taking place in that spacious summer school-room, with its door wide open to admit the breeze of June, and forty imps of fifteen upon its benches. From several pockets would appear small boxes containing white mice, and these would be allowed by their owners to run along the floor and desks. Suddenly a hand

would be raised. "Please sir, I see a mouse. Shall I kill it sir?" "No, don't touch the poor little beast, I'll come and catch it." So old Socrates would rush out of his rostrum and begin his search for the mouse under the benches. Needless to say, he never even caught sight of it, but all over the class sprang up boys with: "Please sir, I see another mouse," and then there would be violent bangs on the floor as though the new mouse were being stamped upon. This would exasperate Socrates beyond measure and he would rise up to denounce the culprit, whom, of course, he could not detect any more than he could the mice. Books would then be buzzed about—not at the mice—and a perfect pandemonium ensue. Socrates would become crimson with rage, and I remember a wonderful climax attained by the introduction of a large collie dog as he was scribbling yellow tickets to ensure "swishing" for the ring-leaders—or those he believed to be the ring-leaders. The dog, hearing him shouting, began to bark. At first he could not see it, but when he did, he threw down his red chalk pencil and rushed to the bench near the door where two boys were holding it by the collar. He seized the boys and the dog in one wild embrace and fell himself, on the floor, as I very nearly did at the same time—for laughter.

Other masters when thus "ragged" were more vicious, and I remember on one occasion at early school (mathematics), when I was quietly discussing with my old friend, Sir Robert Gresley, the respective merits of a pair of postage stamps which we had brought with us to help while along the time, the heavy iron door-key whizzed between his head and mine, and went smash against the wall just behind us, where it dislodged a large piece of plaster. We looked upon

it as rather a good joke, but an inch or two to right or left would have very likely resulted in manslaughter.

To resume. Considering that while at Eton about £400 a year was paid for my education, and I suppose for most of the others, we should have had far smaller classes, and no masters should have been appointed who were unable to keep order. Nowadays, I believe, the educational authorities are everywhere alive to the complex of qualities and attainments necessary to make a good teacher. My experience was that no master ever taught me anything that I could not have learned myself. I never had any *expert* guidance at home or elsewhere. Consequently my private schools, as well as the University, were in the nature of a revel, with brief interludes of application for the purpose of passing examinations. Had I come under the influence of a powerful personality, instead of that of a martinet with the mind of a drill-sergeant, the results would have been widely different. I was naturally of a studious disposition.

Some will say that it is a boy's own fault if he fails to develop his powers at school. But the ethics of a school like Eton are far too strong for a boy, unless he is supported by his teachers. There ought to have been a tutor for every five or six boys, and this would have been easily met out of the amounts paid by our parents. The masters, however, would not have been able to retire on £3,000 a year, which was often the case in my time with those who had houses. Each boy should have the close attention of an expert mind concentrated upon his mental and moral development at this critical period. It would be far less fun for the boy of course, but in the end a great boon, both to the individual and to Society. Of course a

good many youngsters have not much in them for good or ill, but this would enable more attention to be paid to those who had something worth developing. Certainly I am all against mollycoddling or any interference with the free intercourse of personality between boy and boy. This reminds me of what occurred recently at a meeting in London, held to air the views of a living, and every successful young novelist, who has attacked the public-school system. The meeting was largely attended by teachers of both sexes, and the novelist had just been saying that for boys of delicate fibre like himself, it would be preferable that there should be mixed education, boys and girls attending the same classes. As he sat down, a young school-mistress rose and asked if she might put a question. Permission being given, she simply said: "What have the poor girls done to deserve such a fate?" Shouts of applause!

My notion of a tutor is one whom boys could consult and ask for friendly advice. I used to object very strongly to my door being flung wide open at any hour of the day or night to reveal the red face of our little turkey-cock inquisitorially glaring. I see that Lord Frederick Hamilton, in his book of reminiscences, says that his privacy was never invaded in that day. Perhaps he did not read Byron at sixteen, but from what he says I think he would agree that even schoolboys are entitled to a little privacy, even if they do read Byron and smash furniture.

On arriving at Oxford for matriculation at Balliol, I had little notion of the relative positions of the Oxford Colleges, and thought that one had merely to qualify in a few rudimentary subjects before being taken into the arms of Balliol. My father having been a

Balliol man and also his brother, Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff, and my first cousin Arthur having recently also been a member of the College, I had some claim to the attention of Jowett, who certainly received me kindly, entertaining me at breakfast and luncheon. Then he chirruped out a few inquiries as to my family and then relapsed into silence without giving me any information as to the ways of Balliol. I passed the matriculation examination and was told, to my surprise, that I could join the College as soon as I had passed Responsions. Unfortunately I selected Algebra instead of Euclid as one of my subjects, and was ploughed in that paper, though one of the examiners went out of his way to extol my renderings of the first three books of the Odes of Horace. I should have better appreciated his squaring his mathematical colleague. I joined the Unattached and took lovely rooms just facing the church, side by side with Balliol. Here I began to entertain a number of old Etonian friends, and soon met with other interesting people, such as Ion Thynne, Edgar Jepson and Victor Plarr, to whose notebook, which he has very kindly put at my disposal, I am indebted for some of Wilde's sayings and other matters in this chapter.

At the end of the next term I again failed to qualify in Algebra, though again complimented upon my Latin. I began to take an interest in Euclid, and finally qualified in all the subjects. Responsions was like one of those games in which you have to do a number of different things successfully—failure in one of them entailing failure in all. I invariably dropped the egg in the soup ladle, after having jumped the hurdles, said the Lord's Prayer backwards, stood on my head, made a break of thirty at billiards and sworn an



affidavit. The wisecracks who invented Responsions should have substituted this list of subjects which, at any rate, would ensure a steady eye, hand and head.

Having the blue paper slip containing the certificate, I imagined that now, at any rate, I was entitled to enter Balliol without more ado. But so it was not to be, and thereupon ensued a scene which must have been rare in the experience of the "Master." Thus we fell out. I had made the acquaintance of the philosopher and coach, St. George Stock, a delightful man, who suggested my taking Euclid instead of Algebra for Responsions. I asked him whether he thought I should get a First in Greats on three years' reading instead of four, as I did not propose to stay at the University the full four years. Stock, like a wise man, replied that he would not guarantee it, as he thought that my Greek scholarship might not (he did not say would not) come up to the standard of a First in so short a time, although in other respects it was quite possible that I should be successful. This was enough for a headstrong boy: it *must* be a guaranteed First in Greats or a mere Pass! One laughs as one thinks of the folly of it to-day. But Jowett was also very much to blame on that distinctly warm summer morning when we exchanged views on education. He sat in his chair like a long-eared owl disturbed, chirping out at intervals: "You must take one of the Honour Schools if you come to Balliol." I explained that I was not sure of getting a first (as though it mattered whether I got a first or a fiftieth, provided I had the education). "You must take an Honour School," came back the unvarying reply. Jowett had then only "to talk to me like a father," and convince me that it would make but little difference to anyone what class I got. I

continued to claim the right of taking a Pass while he went on like an automaton with his reply, until we were interrupted with a tap at the door, and the appearance of Mr. Forbes, the Master's factotum, with a bundle of papers. I bowed and said that I would not come if I had to take Honours. I had *refused* Balliol, so now we were quits.

But the whole business of matriculation for Balliol in those days was a farce. My good friend Victor Plarr thus describes his own adventures on arriving at about the same period on a quest similar to mine. At the viva, Plarr sat next to a young workman with hobnail boots: "It was a wonder he dared to assume this easy attitude (he sat with one leg folded over the other). . . . He would have made an excellent plumber and gas-fitter. . . . Without any sort of preliminary, Jowett came out in high piping treble with the truly absurd question—'What is the date of David?' This floored our industrial friend. He suggested '500 B.C.' As if the date of David mattered a pin, as if Jowett, an avowed sceptic, cared a pin for David or his epoch. . . . In a bird-like way the Master turned to me, and I said meekly '1000 B.C.?' which, I believe, is near the orthodox mark, though probably it is far from the correct date. Jowett said no more, and sent us off. Result of matriculation: Earl Russell and the Hobnail were admitted among others, because they represented interesting social extremes."

Balliol, as represented by Jowett, wished to "keep up a reputation for advanced views, and hence found promise not only in earls educated as agnostics, but in hobnails."

Another friend of mine was thus addressed in a cheery way by one of the Balliol authorities (still living),

who himself had taken a Second in Modern History : "The fact is, we don't want second-rate men here." My friend answered this masterful jab on the jaw with one on the chin : "Then how the devil are you here, Mr. — ?"

Although I was not a member of Balliol, I had so many friends there that I was constantly in the College, and heard most of what was going on. Jokes were many about the Scottish Professor, Forbes, who is commonly reputed to have translated the Plato, while Jowett's contribution was that of signing his name with minusculous neatness. The Master was certainly able to do that, as witnessed by the anecdote of the Thirty-nine Articles, which it was reported that he would refuse to sign. "Give me a pen," was his sole reply. The mystery and legend as to the Master has equal value with that famous Papal Bull, which French and Latin scholars will at once be able to place by its initial phrase : *Digitus in Oculum*. Forbes was a kindly soul, and the College rhyme :

Here am I : my name is Forbes  
But now the Master me absorbs ;

only too correctly describes the poor fellow's fate. He was shockingly overworked as tutor and examiner and the Master's factotum.

But the Master did not have it all his own way always, though very nearly always he did. My unique and exquisite friend, the Rev. F. Bussell, then a scholar of Magdalen College, provided an exception. He was on one occasion invited to take a walk by the Master. This was a mighty honour, which made the bravest both abound in vanity and tremble lest they should be nonplussed, browbeaten, and altogether squashed by

the epigrammatic and reply-forbidding snubs of Balliol's Master and the University's Vice-Chancellor. Bussell was stout of heart, but not only that, he invariably wore a gardenia in his button-hole, a white satin stock with a diamond horse-shoe pin and an eye-glass kept in place solely by prehensile contraction of the ocular muscles.

They sallied forth along the drear expanse of the Banbury Road, Bussell striding forward like Ajax about to visit Achilles, Jowett pattering along at his side, a diminutive Calchas. As a rule, undergraduates invited to join in this portentous perambulation awaited an indication from the Master as to the course that he desired the conversation to take. Not so Bussell, an expert Hellenist, who afterwards took Firsts in Mods. and also in Greats. He was determined that the conversation should run on lines familiar to himself, and as he was at that time making an exhaustive study of Byzantine Greek writers, he began by asking the Master if he were acquainted with the works of (say) Palæologos Porphyrogeneitos. Upon the Master chirping out a negative, Bussell lightly ran over a list of some twenty historians, grammarians and rhetoricians of the Byzantine period, concluding each name with an inquiry as to whether the Master were acquainted with the work in question. "No, no, no, no," chirped Jowett in reply, redoubling his efforts to keep pace with his youthful companion. Suddenly, at the conclusion of the list, Bussell stopped, the Master rather astonished (but also rather pleased, owing to the pace), also stopped (in the middle of a fair-sized puddle), and heard Bussell enunciate the following appalling words: "Well, what *have* you read, Master?" History is entirely silent as to what occurred after this stupendous audacity. An old professor of Croce's used to say to his class when

they came to a certain date in the sixth century, A.D., "Here the curtain comes down on ancient history and immediately rises upon mediæval." So perhaps it was with Jowett and Bussell—the curtain came down with a run upon Bussell the undergraduate, to rise again at once upon Bussell, the expert Hellenist, whom Jowett would be careful to cherish on the chance of his becoming distinguished in after life.

The above little anecdote shows Jowett with the laugh against him, but, of course, he had the "qualities of his defects," as I heard a member of an ultra-fashionable club remark the other day, turning topsy-turvy a commonplace of the moralists without having the least notion that he was doing so. Jowett had undoubtedly a breadth of mind wanting in many pedagogues. Evidence for this is certainly to be found in the permission to act at Oxford, wrung from him by my old friend, Arthur Bouchier. I have thought it amusing to obtain the eminent actor's account of the proceeding from his own lips, and readers of the following brief narrative will please understand that the pen has been handed over to the present lessee of the Strand Theatre, who will tell them what occurred on the historical occasion, preluded with the alarums and excursions in which he joyed at that time.

*So enter Arthur Bouchier disguised as a man of letters.*

## HOW I FOUNDED THE O.U.D.S.

MY DEAR DOUGLAS,

How many of us are there to whom the Old Vic. at Oxford (and let me underline "*Oxford*"), is not a painful memory. The extraordinary regulation that permitted such a fire-inviting, ramshackle, appalling

building to be kept open for, at any rate, the commencement of each term, was on a par with the recent astonishing ban on the Grand Guignol plays imposed by the present Vice-Chancellor. But there it was. It was invariably the scene of disorderly riots on the part of undergraduates, and on the historic occasion of which I speak, I was myself one of the culprits. A party of us from Christchurch, who had come from a particularly merry dinner, more than filled the stage box. The play presented was a somewhat weird domestic drama, entitled *My Jack*, and apparently it was being depicted by the "Z" Company of the undertaking. At the beginning of the play the hero, "Jack," came on to the stage in a pair of trousers calculated to make any undergraduate hilarious, but which were too utterly provocative for our box-load to stomach. Cries of "Take off those trousers," with a sort of dirge, which spread to the whole house, of "Trousers! Trousers! Trousers!" began, and was chanted loudly through the first act to the evident discomfort of the unfortunate players. Towards the close of the act the hero managed to make himself audible with the remark, "Father, I go to India." A volley of cheers from our box and the rest of the audience, greeted this remark, and in the very short silence that remained a stentorian voice cried, "And if you come back in those trousers *we* will take them off." During the next act the hero did not appear. In the various intervals between the scenes the bars were visited with equal frequency, and when the third act curtain rose on the uplifting picture of the old village home, with some beautifully stuffed doves peeping out from a very rickety dove-cot, and the heroine murmured, "Father, here comes the village," our spirits rose high. "The village" came on—three scene-shifters

and the call-boy ! The Band struck up, and everyone shouted—"Here he is ! here he is ! Jack back home safe at last." Could we believe our eyes?—and in those same trousers ! It was too much ! The mutiny broke out. On to the stage dashed the ringleaders from the box ; round the dove-cot, out through the stage door, rushed the terrified hero—eagerly pursued. A most disgraceful scene took place in Cornmarket Street, with the result that the trousers were borne back in triumph to the theatre, which was then in an uproar. A stampede and a free fight ensued, and, with great difficulty, the police cleared the building. Next morning the ringleaders were, very rightly, "hauled up" before the then Vice-Chancellor—Professor Jowett of Balliol. I was elected spokesman, and in a speech full of fierce invective, I hurled defiance at his benign head, saying that if the authorities had no sense of justice, they might at least have one of humour, and as a protest against the foolish prohibition of legitimate drama in Oxford, and the allowance of such an abortive building as the Old Vic. in its place, the only thing we could do was to give vent to our feelings in the manner which we had done. To the astonishment of all, the great little man looked me full in the face and said, "The others may go. You stay." The result of that interview was that he turned a most attentive ear to all my arguments in favour of establishing the Drama as part—not only of Oxford education, but recreation. My arguments as to the late nights involving much drinking and heavy losses at cards, as against the less expensive and more salutary occupation of rehearsing, thoroughly appealed to him, the result being that he finished by saying—"I will allow you to play Shakespearean plays or Greek plays, provided you can

get ladies to appear in the ladies' characters ; and also, if you can get funds for a proper theatre to be built, I will license it, and will come there at the opening performance." This was indeed a triumph, and a year or so later the New Theatre at Oxford was opened by the Oxford University Dramatic Society, with a performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and as both the theatre and the O.U.D.S. are now part of the Varsity curriculum, the episode of the Old Vic. once more proves that out of evil good often comes.

*March 20, 1922.*

PS.—All this is, of course, ancient history to you, my dear Douglas. Were we not in those historic rooms of ours in King Edward's Street, not far from the above scene of carnage : did we not sit up till the small hours over our pipes and plain soda, while you chid me for my rashness, and, like conspirators, we gradually germinated the scheme of taking the high hand with the authorities, and playing for neck or nothing? So really, my dear Douglas, you were, perhaps, the most important accessory. As I write all this, the photo of that charming bust of dear old Jowett looks cunningly down on me.



## CHAPTER V

### SWINBURNE, WILDE, AND PATER

Oxford Days—Bristol Restaurant—First in London—Luncheon Festivities—Bullington Dinners—The Ishmaelites Society—J. P. Nichol and Swinburne—Maturity at Seventeen—With Swinburne at Louise Molesworth's—Either or Ether—Oxford Days—"Full of the Warm South"—Oscar Wilde Trounced by H. J. Maynard—Anecdotes of Wilde—Injustice of Whistler—Wilde as Conversationalist—Walter Pater—First Meeting—Wilde on Walt Whitman—Lionel Johnson as Roman Catholic—The Escalade—Oxford Alpine Club—Wilde's Sentence Unjust—After Imprisonment—His Feat in Paris—A Lost Masterpiece.

THANK you, my dear friend, for your contribution, I again take that oar in hand which one of the troubadours declared to be heavier than the oar of the galleys. I shall proceed to paddle gently along and down the stream of Oxford life in those days in the company of that gentlest of people, Charles Leveson-Gower, who told me of what must have been the most exciting event of his life, when he went to see his tutor, Forbes, with an essay for his inspection. "Come in," replied Forbes, cheerfully, to his modest tap. Leveson-Gower entered at the sound of this encouraging voice, and as he did so, an entire bottle of superfine scarlet ink whizzed past his head, to smash in rosy pattern on the wall. "Luminous" Leveson, as we used to call him from his smooth hair and invariably ultra-shining, bright appearance, immaculate at all points, hastily withdrew. Other Balliol men who used often to come round to revel at the rooms in the Cornmarket, whither I now had migrated and shared with one of my best friends, Albert Osborne, who had got tired of living

in College, were Edward A. Mitchell Innes, now a K.C. ; Victor Morier, son of the Ambassador, Sir Robert ; Billy Tyrell, now Permanent (or is it Eternal?) Secretary at the F.O. ; Hubert Beaumont, son of my friend the great financier and man-of-the-world, the late Lord Allendale, and A. H. E. Grahame. Albert Osborne was very pale and fair, with smooth hair. I hardly knew him when he was at Mitchell's at Eton, as he was slightly older, but at Oxford we shared not only rooms, but at that period, ideas. He was a most delightful companion on any adventure, and invariably maintained that extraordinary calm which will, I think, go out of the world with my generation as, indeed, it must admit all this democratic push and hustle. I remember when Oscar Wilde appeared to review a performance of the O.U.D.S., to which we both belonged as original members, he was asked to give his impressions of Osborne. I always think he hit him off to a T. : " 'I will turn you to stone,' said Pallas Athene, if you harken not to the words of my wisdom. 'Ah, but I am marble already,' said Osborne—little Osborne, and passed on."

It was the useless but decorative society of such people as Osborne and Cuthbert Clifton, whom Osborne introduced to me at the Bristol, in Cork Street—the first restaurant in London run on modern lines—that kept me out of the Union Debating Society, where I might have enjoyed the flower of rhetoric from such lips as those of the present Archbishop of York and Lord Robert Cecil—the latter I only met occasionally at the Gridiron Club, of which we were fellow-members.

Luncheon was the chief feast in those days, and we certainly did ourselves well : oysters and champagne were the order of the day, both at College

feasts and at lodgings. I remember some young Sybarites actually mingling Vintage Lafitte claret with Pommery and Greno champagne. On one occasion, at my new rooms over Wheeler's in the High, about ten of us rushed out and found the fire-escape, which, I believe, was put rather out of commission owing to the antics which we performed with that machine. We were very rightly fined ten pounds apiece for this dangerous frolic. Bullingdon dinners were great functions, and I remember frequently proceeding to them with Osborne and Morier in a hansom—rather a tight fit, as Morier was almost a giant. Business began early, and with the disappearance of the fish, a large number of roysterers were in eighteenth-century high spirits. Bread used to fly about sometimes in heavy chunks. I remember one of these hitting a rather hot-headed youth of my acquaintance, now partner in a historical banking firm, plumb on the side of the head. He immediately seized a lump of crust and threw it in the direction of the aggressor as hard as he could. It struck an empty tumbler, shivering it to atoms. The whole cheek of one of the Cravens sitting near me was instantaneously covered with blood from the splinters of the glass. But the revel went on just the same, minus the victim, who retired from the scenes.

In 1885, we some of us founded a literary society, called the Ishmaelites, where we read papers on literary subjects. Ion Thynne read one on Swinburne, I treated of Edgar Allan Poe, etc. The Ishmaelites would have liked to have been far more alarming than they really were.

My greatest Oxford friend, on the literary side, was J. P. Nichol, whom I met in 1886, during my last year. He was a Balliol man, "Snell exhibitioner."

whatever that may be, but far more important, a real poet in outlook and temperament. He was a member of another literary society, the *Dolores*, where they declaimed Swinburne's magical lines. Thynne used to wail rather than sing the lines, but was in high repute as a Swinburnian reciter. I greatly preferred Nichol's mode, which was far more melodious, and based upon direct experience, as his father, the Scottish Professor, had been a great friend of the poet, who used to stay with the family.

I possess a copy of a poem by Rossetti, entitled *Shameful Death*, copied entirely in the childish handwriting of Swinburne. It formed part of a bundle of unprintable but exceedingly amusing letters that Swinburne had written to the Professor, chiefly on literary subjects. He was at the time engaged in a dispute with the editor of Shelley, Buxton Forman, with whose name he played terrible tricks. The correspondence is shot through with radiant flashes of light, mingled with outbursts of childishness. The handwriting clearly shows the curious elements of which the poet was composed. Of my friend, J. P. Nichol, he had said when he saw him for the first time: "If ever I saw a young man with a look of genius, there he stands!" This was a unique compliment from Swinburne—at least, I never heard of his apostrophizing anyone else in like manner. My friend was indeed a genius, though he will never be recognized as such owing to the deep strain of mystical quietism which ran through him, turning all the gauds of life to dust. He could with great ease have become a tutor and fellow of Balliol had he deigned to work for the Schools and take the high class to which his amazing abilities entitled him. At the age of seventeen, a poem of his was

published, I think, in the *Nineteenth Century* : by twenty-one or so he was at his highest period of development. He never deigned to offer any of his verse elsewhere, though some of his sonnets were equal to Rossetti's, and his knowledge of the pre-Raphaelites and their ways was unrivalled. He was like a youthful king sitting in the ruins of his splendid palace. His astonishing verbal memory for verse or prose brought any of our poets before us in connection, for he would quote pages of Crashaw, Milton, Keats, Swinburne or Rossetti as though he were reading over their shoulders as they wrote. At the time we met I was passing through the fiery furnace of a love affair, and we used to spend hours of an evening together in my rooms at 13, King Edward Street (I changed my rooms each term). Here we made a considerable number of rather melodious sounds, reciting poetry in English and French, and it was typical of the environment that the proprietor of the house eventually objected to the "noise" of our recitations, though the street was the noisiest in Oxford; shouts of all sorts of hunting-men, blowing of coach-horns at all hours of the night being accepted by the Philistine proprietor as in the natural order of things.

Nichol also disagreed with Jowett in the matter of his studies as I had done. The Master, too, had been impressed with Nichol when he first saw him, and correctly thought he perhaps had another great poet under his wing. And so, indeed, he had, but of course worldly success being Jowett's standard, the moment he saw that "young Nichol" was not going to try for a fellowship, he dropped him like a cold egg at one of those breakfast parties to which were bidden hobnails, earls—and possible genius.

Nichol, to his intense disgust, was on one occasion forced to write a book by the necessity for obtaining a little cash ! This he did contemptuously, almost at a sitting : it is a monograph on Victor Hugo, and by far the best study of the French poet in our language, though Nichol always spoke of it with contempt and said he took no pains with it. The fact was that his intuition was so infallible and the riches of memory and imagination at his command were so great that when obliged to open a door of his miser's cabinet, pieces of eight came tumbling over one another upon the publisher's counter in golden profusion.

There is a beautiful passage in Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, which applies to my friend. It begins "*J'aime ces silencieux qui emporte leur secret dans la tombe,*" and I always felt that Nichol, with those wild blue eyes of his flashing their intuitions, saw something that for others was concealed.

My own intercourse with Swinburne was only occasional, and much later in life, but I may as well mention now what rises in the memory. I too enjoyed the hospitality at Putney of which my old friend and fellow dramatic critic, Max Beerbohm, has made so entertaining a dish. I too sat at the table between the two old men, Watts-Dunton and Swinburne, during the repast, which certainly was not nearly so interesting to me as conversation alone with the poet in his library. He always gave me the impresison of two things : a great red-plumed eagle pinioned and unable to rise from the ground more than a few feet. He would sit by me on the sofa, and as he grew interested in the sound of his own words, he would spread his arms like wings and agitate his body just like a bird taking flight, while his large green eyes blazed with

enthusiasms of the past, kindled in the enthusiasm of the present moment. This was very evident to me also on one of the last occasions that we met in London at a house hospitable also to the poet, Mrs. Molesworth's, authoress of the *Cuckoo Clock*. Mrs. Molesworth's daughter, Juliet, is the wife of my brother Julian, whose feats in another field I hope to mention. Swinburne loved Mrs. Molesworth's work, about which he has written, and included her in his very short visiting list. On the occasion of this last meeting, I remember his shouting to Watts (both were very deaf) as they entered the room: "Be sure you call the cab and let us get away immediately after lunch." Watts shouted back in reply that he would not fail to do so.

Luncheon, as at Putney, was rather a strained meal: I remember Miss Olive Molesworth's asking which of the tiny twin nieces, Mary or Alice, Swinburne preferred. At first he did not realize what was meant, but when he did, replied with his usual emphasis: "*Both delightful* children: of course there is *no difference whatever* between them" (this sentence was punctuated with those queer staccato movements of the body to which I have referred). This was not very encouraging, but after luncheon I managed to get him started on Baudelaire by quoting a few lines from the exquisite farewell to the great French poet, and from that, by way of the "Leucadian leap" to Sappho, to Byron and to his own prowess in swimming. At once he began to talk of his visit to Sark, and described his early morning vow to swim out to sea until the sun was fully risen above the horizon. He rose and fell rhythmically with the waxing and waning of his own words, and it was one of the most felicitous

moments in a life crowded with exquisite impressions thus to see the golden and purple and silver of that morning in the Channel as the poet brought it back to life and laid it before the eyes and ears. Meanwhile time had been going on, but Swinburne was now wound up, clocks and cabs had no meaning for him, and when Watts came up and discreetly shouted that the cab was waiting, he was waved imperiously away with a single gesture, and I enjoyed an avalanche of sound and colour lasting far into the afternoon.

The other impression given to me by Swinburne was of a diver walking with great care on the bed of the ocean. With infinite precautions he would approach an arm-chair, carefully inspect and feel it; having manœuvred his way round the rocks and boulders represented by other chairs and tables. Wherever he was, I had the feeling that he did not belong to *terra firma* like you and me, but should really be some thousands of feet above or below his present level—in the empyrean or the abysses of the ocean.

To return to those undergraduate years at Oxford, as I look back upon them they rise again like Keats' beaker, "full of the warm south," "with beaded bubbles winking at the brim"—bubbles of the champagne we so often quaffed, and of that more æry vintage that runs only in the veins of youth triumphant. My time was about equally spent in revelling with the revellers and treading the fairylands that poetry opens to the ken of those who will take the trouble to court her, not on bended knee, but with the gallant assurance of the knightly lover as Keats advised. Only once again have I trodden equally enchanted ground, and that was in the late 'nineties at Florence, where a gay band of us did astonishing things beneath the light of the moon. At Oxford, as at



Florence, everyone who was not revelling seemed pleased to make a flowery way for the revellers—with the exception at Oxford of the Proctors and Bulldogs, who were paid to be unpleasant, and hardly earned their wages, so little did they interfere with our proceedings: indeed one grew almost to like their square chins and boots as shading for our revels. At Oxford, it is true, the revels were often conducted within doors, whereas at Florence we frequently danced through the streets, headed by our music and by fair maidens, strewing flowers on the unamazed Florentines. They accepted us, rather to our surprise, as quite normal, and, I fear, looked upon our proceedings with a critical eye—an eye that had witnessed the processional triumphs of so many poets onwards from Petrarch to Ariosto, and their successors could hardly be expected to lighten up at gauche Anglo-Saxon and semi-Celtic gambols of blond young barbarians from Ultima Thule—though they were lenient, very lenient, and always made a lane for us to pass across the Piazza!

Balliol and Christ Church and New College men were my chief associates; Jowett I saw occasionally, but had no further intercourse with him. The last occasion was when he went to Shelley's College University in order to commemorate the author of *Adonais*, (who had been sent down for his earlier writings). I can see him trotting along now in his Vice-Chancellor's robes, with a few other University dignitaries in the rear. Balliol was certainly sufficiently atheistic in the 'eighties, and there used to be a joke which always tickled me, about the Balliol College Chapel with its "gaunt-ribbed barrel roof," to quote again friend Plarr. When it was proposed by an enlightened set of railroad contractors to run a railway right into Oxford, Balliol was said to have

jumped at the suggestion, and to have offered their Chapel as terminus.

Oscar Wilde visited Oxford as a critic of the drama in my time and amused a great many people with his paradox. The flow of his language and the quickness of his wit were astonishing. Yet he did not always have it his own way, and I remember, during a discussion on poetry, after he had been preaching his creed of beauty as the sole value, my friend, H. J. Maynard of St. John's, sprung up and trounced him vigorously for neglecting ethics. Wilde was quite nonplussed by Maynard's youthful vigour, and could only murmur: "Stern young moralist, stern young moralist." This was a feat on Maynard's part, and indeed among all my Oxford acquaintances Maynard went nearest to living what I would call the Shelleyan life: ethics were very prominent in his mind, yet the æsthetic side was by no means absent, and I have clear memory of some beautiful Spenserian stanzas, which he once read to me at Delgaty. They were perfumed like a flowering branch of Shelley's *Sensitive Plant*. He became a judge in India, and I have only met him once since his retirement, on a pension, some years ago. I like to greet him here.

Wilde was, indeed, rarely nonplussed. I was never myself a member of the Crabbet Park Club, one of the rules of which was that no member must have been guilty of serious work, but my friend Harry Cust and the present Lord Curzon of Kedleston both belonged. The former told me that on one occasion Wilde was the guest of the Club at dinner, and some of the members wished him to be elected a member. Among these was not numbered Lord Curzon. An objection was raised that the proposed member was not eligible,

because he had been guilty of doing serious work, namely, reading the lessons in a surplice as a "demi." at Magdalen College, Oxford. Wilde at once rose to reply, admitting the fact, but pleading extenuating circumstances as follows: "I always read the lessons with an air of scepticism, and was invariably reproved by the Warden after Divine Service, for 'levity at the lectern.'"

Then, too, his *viva voce* in *Rudiments of Faith and Religion* at Oxford. He was put on to construe from the Greek of the New Testament, at the verse of St. Matthew which records the sale of the Saviour for thirty pieces of silver by Barabbas. Wilde, who got a First in Greats and taught Mrs. Langtry Latin, construed a few verses rapidly and correctly. The examiner interrupted: "Very good, that will do, Mr. Wilde." "Hush, hush," replied the candidate, raising an admonitory finger, "let us proceed and see what happened to the unfortunate man."

Plarr tells of Wilde's appearance at Osman Edward's breakfast table, and of his dictum that my friends, Ion Thynne and Edgar Jepson, were respectively the Byron and Shelley of their day. Here he was quite wrong, for Thynne was more like the hero of Huysmann's *A Rebours*, and Jepson, I am sure, will not claim to have resembled either poet. He is too fine a poet in prose to care for such comparisons in conversation. But Plarr records other sayings of Wilde with more of the genuine ring to their metal. Sounding brass may be, but who could make the small brass of conversation so variously and *amusingly* resonant as Wilde? Of Sir Frederick Leighton, he said that "He always seems to paint in scented soaps;" of T. Carlyle, "He is a Rabelaisian moralist;" of sham classicism,

"We can like all the bad work of all ages but our own, yet even Firth may come to be admired for his quaintness and moral force a thousand years hence."

Whistler and others have been very unjust to Wilde in accusing him of plagiarism. He certainly prigged, but who among great wits has not done so? He always added a twist of his own that made the joke as much his as if he had minted the original metal, which, by the way, existed as metal long, long before. The fact was that Whistler, a wit himself, was jealous of excellence anywhere. I always hope that Sir Coleridge Kennard will carry out the project that he told me of some years ago at Rome, as we strode up and down his sun-kissed paradise terrace in the Via Gregoriana and capped one another's Wildiana. He was collecting from the lips of those that had heard them with a view to publication, all the un-rendered Wilde stories and epigrams. I can add a trifle or two to those I have mentioned, but always regret that I saw so little of the most brilliant conversationalist of my time—I have heard others of note, such as Pater, Whistler, Beardsley, d'Annunzio, Renan and Croce. I remember a laird in the south of Scotland, who had entertained Wilde on one of his lecturing tours, telling me that he had asked the lecturer if he would like to see the garden and then go for a walk. Wilde said he would be delighted. The garden was about a quarter of a mile from the house, and thither they proceeded. After duly inspecting flowers and shrubs the host turned to his guest with: "Well, shall we go for our walk?" "Go for our walk! Why, we have just come back from a long and delightful walk," was the reply.

It is curious how rarely the Irish bull comes

into Wilde's epigrams, though in paradox, at any rate, wonderful effects are attainable with it. Witness the following by an Irish baronet of my acquaintance which happened the other day in my own presence. Our visit to the same hospitable and charming lady happened to coincide. The conversation turned upon social undesirables. The baronet declared that it was highly reprehensible to introduce any of these into a respectable family circle. With such virtuous sentiments we all agreed, and our hostess then remarked, addressing the baronet with a smile: "I hope Sir Timothy (a substituted name) has not met any one objectionable in our family circle." "Indeed and I have, Mrs. ——" came from the baronet in his richest brogue. "And who may I ask was the individual in question?" "It was Patthrick Murrphy, and I introduced him to you meself."

I wonder if this will appear so excruciatingly funny in print as it did on flying from the lips of its creator, who spoke, of course, in all seriousness.

No doubt the reason that Wilde never committed anything in this line was his possession of an acutely logical mind that controlled the flow of his fancy within its banks. What a pity that it did not control his conduct!

At Oxford I met him several times, and was one day walking along the gravel path behind Keble when I met him in company with a pale-faced, rather sad-looking man. I was very proud when they stopped, and I was introduced to Walter Pater. Pater, to whom I shall refer later, I got to know better than Wilde, though here, too, I regret that I did not see more of him at Oxford and in London. I went a few times to luncheon with Wilde at Tite Street when his wife

Constance was alive. I had known her some years before as Miss Lloyd, and she had come to stay with us at Delgaty, where I had written verses to her eyes and presented her with a coronal of water-lilies and one of *linnæa borealis*. This rare and beautiful little creeper of the north I had discovered when, as a child of five, I had trotted into the wood during the month of June and found beneath the great Scots firs a tiny, white bloom growing upon long tendrilled stems with rounded leaves, less than a threepenny piece in size. I brought a handful of it to my father and mother, neither of whom at once recognized the plant, although both were botanists. Of late years its area of growth has extended, and I daresay that it now covers ten yards square, but it has never been found elsewhere on Delgaty, and is, I believe, known only in a very few places in Great Britain. Less rare in Norway, Linnæus, the great botanist, called it by his own name, so much did its fairy-like grace caress his eye. And very well it looked as a coronal to the brow of Constance with a water-lily or so lolling at her virginal breast.

On one occasion, I remember Wilde's declaiming against Walt Whitman, whose crudities of language have always offended me. In an interview that he had with him, the author of *Specimen Days* remarked with satisfaction: "I aim at making my verse look all neat and pretty on the pages, like the epitaph on a square tombstone." My friend, Victor Plarr the poet, who also heard the anecdote told by Wilde, but on a different occasion (in Herbert Horne's rooms), adds that while repeating the quotation Wilde held up an imaginary page and pointed along it. Certainly Wilde's prose is classical, and it was amusing to hear him disputing amicably on that first meeting with Pater, who had

dropped his favourite remark to me when I had shyly pleaded guilty to having written a dramatic poem *Escarlamonde*: "Why do you write poetry? It is so much more difficult to write prose." Of Wilde's verse very little of first-rate quality exists, but his *Ballad of Reading Gaol* and *The Harlot's House* are jewels that will glitter on later worlds than ours. Of this latter poem I possess a holograph manuscript with a complimentary inscription by the author to the effect that he had never heard it better said. I remember on the occasion of my repeating it, his reading first Poe's *Annabel Lee*, of which he was very fond, and then Keats' sonnet on *Blue*, the latter from the virginal MS., which he said had been given to him after one of his lectures in the United States by a very old lady, who declared that she was related to Keats—I think he said a niece—and that she had been prompted to present him with it owing to his beautiful reading of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

The friend I have already quoted also describes evenings at 20, Fitzroy Street, where there was a sort of late pre-Raphaelite colony. Here came Wilde on one or two occasions and received much worship from Lionel Johnson and Dowson, who "seemed to kneel before him side by side." It was said that the great man wore a black shirt-front.

Dowson I only met once or twice with my friend, J. P. Nichol, already described, but of Lionel Johnson I saw a good deal at Oxford in my last year, when I had migrated from the unattached to Exeter College, where I was equally "unattached." He was a truly delightful companion, frail and slightly built, steeped in the Greek and Latin classics and a keen Roman Catholic. He first introduced me to Newman's

*Apologia* and *Defence of Faith*, which I remember reading and afterwards discussing with him in his rooms at New College to a late hour, and on more than one occasion having to take my departure by dropping from somebody's college window that was just above the level of Holywell Street. At about midnight Johnson would put down the *Apologia* and say: "I think, my dear Ainslie, that the labourer is worthy of his hire, especially if he toil through the silent watches of the night. Shall it be champagne or sal-volatile and water?" With great firmness I invariably selected the former beverage, while that scholar and gentleman, my host, generally took "a little of both." Johnson was also a great admirer of Pater's work, and some of his best work is descriptive of Pater's curious perfections.

Those escalades of windows became almost a part of the routine of college life. I had already had some practice in the art at Eton, and flatter myself that even now I could cope with some problems in bars, bricks and glass that would paralyse my contemporaries at any rate. After I had gone down, what must have been a pleasant little social club, was formed at Oxford under the title of "The Oxford Alpine Club." As described to me by the alarmed mother of one of its most distinguished members, this club used to meet after midnight in the room of each in succession. Entrance was, of course, obtained by escalading the college wall by means of ropes, grappling irons, and other customary Alpine tools. After a little light refreshment, assuming that the host of the evening was a member of Balliol, the members of the club would leave that college by the wall separating it from Trinity, and then, strolling across the Broad, would drop



in upon the Rector of Exeter, but finding him plunged in profound slumbers they would have the consideration not to awake him, but proceed, of course "across country" by way of Brasenose to Christ Church, where a light supper would be provided. The members became very expert at the negotiation of the big jumps, and all went as merrily as an American divorce until one day an old member of the club came down on a visit, and joined in the jaunt as in former days. Whether it was that the light supper at the "House" had included too much lobster and champagne or that his memory had been clouded with the frivolities of Mayfair, he made a sad mistake on his way through New College, turning the handle of the wrong door and plunging at three in the morning into the apartment of a spinster of some fifty summers, nearly related to the Head of the College. Of course she was at once convinced that her fate was to be Lucretia's and rent the air with piercing shrieks. Unfortunately, instead of rapidly retreating the way he came, my friend began an elaborate apology for mistaking the door, and an explanation of the chief aims and objects of the Oxford Alpine Club. Long before he had finished she was convinced that instead of Tarquin, an escaped lunatic stood before her, and the shrieks redoubled. Quantities of undergraduates in every shade of dressing-gown, with a sprinkling of blinking dons came crowding up the staircase and filled the quad. The fat was in the fire, and my poor friend had to pay considerable sums in the Vice-Chancellor's Court, besides being struck off all manner of books and warned off the sacrosanct precincts within the University's jurisdiction.

To return for a moment to Wilde. I saw but little

of him after leaving Oxford beyond the two or three occasions of lunching in Tite Street; he became the fashion about the same time, and was dining out a great deal, often without his wife. Also, for the first time, I began to hear stories of an unpleasant nature about him and decided to drop the connection, as anything of that sort has always been inexpressibly shocking and distasteful to me, though I hope that I am broad-minded enough to recognize and appreciate uniquely splendid intellectual qualities whenever they appear. It is easy enough for perfectly normal people, like the present writer, and ninety-nine hundreds of the community to blame those afflicted in the manner of poor Wilde, but I think that with the advance of mental pathology, British will fall into line with Continental jurisprudence and recognize that his case called rather for confinement under the care of doctors than for a savage sentence worse than death. Thus it was that I saw nothing of him for many years, though I occasionally met and heard of him from those who did see him, such as the late Lady Ripon, who as Lady De Grey, stood by him all through his troubles and told me several curious little details about his life in prison and afterwards when he was released. The last time I met her was at Lady Northcliffe's at luncheon at 22, St. James's Place, during the war, when she sat between the late Lord Northcliffe and myself and regaled me with those scraps of London gossip which are nothing but flimsy in themselves until the limelight of a bright and kindly wit like hers dresses them up and sets them dancing in the ballroom of the brain—and are not bank notes flimsy?

Wilde also had in a supreme degree the capacity for rendering interesting or amusing, almost any material

that he touched, and I remember a rather common little theatrical proprietor telling me of the strange circumstances that connected him for a short time with Wilde, after his release from prison. Wilde was in Paris at the time, and it was a question of getting him to finish a play, for which he had already received (and spent) two hundred pounds "in advance of royalties." The syndicate was beginning to get anxious about this two hundred, yet was quite prepared to venture a great deal more if there were a good prospect of obtaining the play. Wilde was notoriously short of money, some said even of food, and that he was living chiefly on absinthe, so the syndicate decided to make an appointment at one of the big restaurants—I think he said the Café de Paris. Six o'clock was the hour fixed, and the little manager, who might be described as gross but not green sat waiting anxiously, flanked on either side by dapper beady-eyed individuals of like kidney. At about seven the lace-covered swing doors swayed slowly and admitted the dramatist, looking very unkempt and miserable. He approached the table, and with a semi-circular bow to the trio which ignored their proffered paws said: "Gentlemen, I have here with me one of the four acts of the play that I promised to deliver to you finished to-day. Certain things have occurred to make it impossible for me to write down the remaining acts, but they are all here" (touching his forehead he sank into a chair facing them and lit a cigarette) "only you must give me wine, yellow sparkling wine, and plenty of it. Then I will tell you all the play, and I will write down the last three acts to-morrow." Champagne was at once ordered, and also food, which Wilde hardly touched. As the wine rapidly disappeared and reappeared in new

bottles the play grew like a flower upon the lips of the poet, holding the three of them entranced, so that they even forgot their material interests as they listened to the wondrous dialectic. For he made each personage live and, as it were, walk about before entering the action, introducing them, one by one, sketched with infallible precision in a few strokes. Then he went on with the actual dialogue, sparkling all over with wit and humorous characterization, like a heap of rubies and diamonds moved before the eyes and arranged in the form of a crown by this Faberger in words. He did much more than repeat the play from memory, for he suggested the acting, the scenery, the stage, and even the aristocratic audience, adding all sorts of sly comments and interpolations in the form of stage asides and directions. They amounted to flashlights thrown upon the unwritten script, and gave his hearers the impression of being present at a successful first-night performance. Thus he improvised and created for about an hour and a half; then he suddenly declared that he must leave them, but would infallibly deliver the remainder of the play within the week. They handed to him a small further sum on account, which he accepted with the gesture of one conferring a great favour, which was perfectly true, and repeating the semi-circular magnificence of his bow and again ignoring proffered paws plunged into the stream of the Avenue de l'Opéra, never to be seen alive by any of them again.

What became of the one written act of the play? I believe that it eventually passed into the possession of one of his many false friends, under whose name a garbled version of the play was served up unsuccessfully after Wilde's death. Garbled indeed, even if memorized from parts of the telling heard or over-

heard. The play itself, in all its splendour of thought and expression, surpassing for brilliancy *A Woman of No Importance* and the irresistible *Ernest*, had but one performance—in the Café de Paris on a winter's night before an audience of three. There will never be another.

## CHAPTER VI

### MERRY-GO-ROUND

Anecdote of Francisque Sarcey—"Mr. Shelley"—William Morris and the Assafoetida—Cudgels and Communism—Arthur Bouchier and Jowett—Hon. Robert Scot Montagu—A Jovial *Alcestis*—O.U.D.S.—My *Midsummer Night's Dream*—Billiard Match with Ralph Nevill—Marquis of Clanrikarde v. Sir Robert Peel.

I HAVE given a good deal of space to these glimpses of Wilde, though, of course, I saw a number of other people during those years, and have tried to bring some of them into the picture, but he was by far the most brilliant, and often there is the semblance of something to catch hold of in a personality, which turns out to be thin air after all.

Of Sarcey, the great French dramatic critic, it is told in this connection that on one occasion he decided (like most dramatic critics if they would be honest and confess) that he would do a bit of a job and puff his friend's son. It was not a question of a play, but of a book of poems on this occasion, for Sarcey also gave lectures on literature. He duly appeared and faced a crowded audience armed with notebooks, holding the volume on which he was going to lecture in his hand. He had inserted markers to guide him in selecting for quotation certain passages which had seemed on a first perusal less bad than the rest.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he began, "I am going to tell you to-day about a new poet, a remark-

able young man, whose first volume of verse you see in my hand. According to my usual custom, I will begin by reading to you some of the most striking and beautiful passages and then comment upon them. For instance, the following—he turned the pages to the first quotation—"Does it not strike you ——?" he glanced down the page and continued: "No, no, we will pass on to the next. No, that's worse." And so, on and on he went until he came to the sixth marker, and desperately plunged this time into the reading aloud of the passage in question. When he came to the end he said, "Does not this strike you as singularly beautiful?" Then his native honesty and sincerity got the better of him and he continued: "I am sure it does not, for a worse written, worse constructed set of verses it has rarely been my misfortune to read aloud." And so he went on, now quoting freely from all the marked passages and explaining to the highly amused audience what an extraordinarily bad writer was his friend's son—heartily damning what he had set out to belaud.

A like reason prevents the present writer, who is equally grieved, from dwelling upon the people who loomed big enough in those days, but have since sunk into oblivion, like that New College don who during my first term took part in a discussion upon Shelley's writings, referring all the time to the poet as "Mr. Shelley," and to such work as the *Epipsychidion* as "pretty verses." I remember springing to my feet and hurling unmeasured invective at the unlucky speaker, who shrivelled up altogether and finally slunk out of the room, although, as I was afterwards informed, he was one of the lights of the College Debating Society. I believe he died during

the term, so that on this occasion, at any rate, poetic justice was done. It is curious and admirable what force the sincere expression of a passionate conviction gives. Shelley amounted almost to a religion with some of us in those days, and like most young men, I passed through a phase of vague uncritical socialistic sentiment, inspired by the poet. This led me to attend a meeting held by William Morris and Aveling in Holywell Street with a view of preaching Socialism to the undergraduates. The meeting was packed, and I remember that I was sitting close to the platform where Aveling first held forth in a rather unconvincing way. His place was soon taken by the old paper-hanging poet, and we all sat tensely awaiting his eloquence. Suddenly, just as he was opening his lips, with the gospel of universal equality upon them, there came a cry of: "My God, what an awful stench!" from the third row of seats. People sprang up and rushed away from the infected spot, but the appalling odour spread all over the hall, and I saw the beaming countenance of my friend Arthur Capel, emerging through the mist of the assafoetida, which he had so accurately timed to explode at the psychological moment. The "nice" ladies present made a rapid exit, and people rushed to and fro. Aveling slunk away like a jackal, but Morris was splendid. Like an old white-maned lion he stood his ground and roared from the platform that he was ready to fight any four of "you young blackguards." Shouts of laughter and cheers greeted me as with one or two others, including H. J. Maynard, I climbed on the platform to support him. The leonine front showed by the old poet prevented further extremes of ragging, but the audience was in no mood to hear of any Utopia



which began by smelling so bad. There was nothing for it but to retire in good order, which we proceeded to do at the invitation of Morris. He had rooms at the Clarendon, and thither we adjourned. On arrival he ordered whiskies all round, and his astonishment was frank when Maynard and I and other young sprigs Shelleyan refused the beverage on the ground that we never took alcohol. "What *is* happening to the younger generation?" growled old Morris, as he drank up all the whiskies himself and regaled us epically with the breath of mighty songs.

My friend Plarr records of this meeting that he went to it as a steward, though his views did not and do not coincide with those of Webb, Lenin, Shaw or Trotsky. The journal *Justice* was to be sold at the meeting, so Plarr asked Morris if he utterly despised profit. "I do utterly despise it," replied Morris, plumping into the pitfall. "Then why do you sell *Justice*?" Morris then grumpily gave orders that *Justice* was to be given away. Plarr further adds that Ion Thynne knocked Vere down with a cudgel. This I did not see, and perhaps the Hon. Antony Vere will tell us what happened to him at the meeting. He appeared to me to be winning all along the line. Plarr also declares that he was so pleased with Thynne at the time that he presented him with the *Colloquies of Erasmus* (1671). Whether this gift was bestowed as a reward for knocking down Antony Vere or is rather to be looked upon as a token of general appreciation for his learning in the Greek and Latin Fathers in the original tomes, which decorated and concealed his shelves and floor in the small room at New College, and of the Longleat pheasants which abounded at his hospitable breakfast table beneath the gigantic Japanese

umbrella that shaded its centre, I do not know. He has been dead a good many years now, and passed most of his time latterly at Fort Augustus with the monks, or at Rushmore with his brother Alec, where we stayed together the last time I saw him. He presented me at Oxford with a copy of that great French work, the *Fleurs du Mal* of Baudelaire in the wickedest binding that he could devise. It is a beautiful volume. I shall not bequeath it to the Carnegie Free Library. The edges of the leaves are a vivid sulphur, the binding dappled green calf, the sides of light and deeper and a deepest green as it breaks against a nest of treacherous golden serpents in the centre, and again and again upon golden dragons and living gargoyles at the corners. The back is a rich network of golden tracery among serpents concealed in a meadow of green. Within, the dedication to a fellow lover of the Muses and some lines in Greek from Homer.

We were, some of us, naïvely subtle and perverse in those days, which has not prevented us from turning out quite decent citizens in after life. Perhaps it was a pose, and Ion Thynne was rather the moralist of his later days, than a mediæval necromancer controlling sinister potencies. Serpents were the fashion in "neckwear" at breakfast. We generally carried one or two loose in our pockets. Jepson kept his black brood in the ivy outside his window at Balliol. I preferred the lighter variety with a Cubist pattern. My landladies disliked both.

With the exception of Lord Robert Cecil, none of my acquaintances at Oxford have become very prominent in politics, though there were some fine speakers among them, notably the late R. C. Fillingham, who took orders and was much in the public eye

through his attacks on Ritualism in the Church of England. These were not limited to rhetoric, but assumed a drastic form which led to his appearance in the Law Courts on more than one occasion. Delightful in conversation, he managed to carry with him in pulpit, platform, or witness-box, that same easy breezy style, punctuated with witticisms and delivered with the air of a man of the world endowed with complete knowledge, and letting his audience enjoy just the quintessence—and no more. One felt he had all the rest about him in his ample pockets, or at any rate in his overcoat within easy reach. Fillingham was a far more brilliant man than many members of the present Cabinet, and it is curiously true that the world “knows nothing of its greatest men” in a sense different from that of Philip van Arteveldt, where a discontented man is supposed to be speaking. Certainly in politics it is a complex of qualities mostly *practical* that win the great positions, and the like applies in the Church, at the Bar, and (in England) on the Stage. The *virtuosi* like Fillingham rarely come into the full limelight.

My old friend, Arthur Bouchier, happens to be a very fine comedian, unsurpassable in certain parts, especially social comedy and in certain Shakespearean characters. Had he, however, always worked under the directions of a stage-manager his artistic achievement would probably have been greater. But what has made his success since those Oxford days when he was at New Inn Hall, that handy retreat to Christ Church and other Colleges, long since abolished, has been his practical social sense. His cleverness in flattering that vain old pedagogue Jowett and persuading him to not only permit but to patronize the theatre at

Oxford as Vice-Chancellor, and the foundation of the O.U.D.S. (Oxford University Dramatic Society) of which the present writer is an original member, were part and parcel of that practical judgment which has given him success and provided the stepping-stones for his London career. In those far-off days I remember at one of the meetings of the O.U.D.S. there was considerable opposition to some scheme of Bouchier's. He heard the various speakers out, then sprang to his feet with an utterance that carried conviction as he thumped it into the table, though it still makes me laugh when I repeat it: "— d——n and — (supply local colour). I, A. B., *known on two Continents* to be thwarted by a parcel of b-o-y-s!" (He was quite unknown outside a small circle at that time).

I was never an actor, but used to contribute articles on those early Shakesperean productions to the Oxford Magazine, and was (and am) always immensely entertained with Bouchier's society, for if he will allow me to say so, he is invariably quite as good company off the stage as upon it. We used frequently to meet, and I heard all the secrets of the stage as we knew it at Oxford, and learned in little what went on and goes on in the management of great theatrical affairs. Brightest of the many brilliant young men who took part in the Greek and Elizabethan plays done in my time at Oxford, was my dear old friend, Robert Scott Montagu, brother of my good friend, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu. He was a member of New College, full of the joy of living, and endowed with a most charming personality. I remember during the run of an early production of the *Alcestis* of Euripides in Greek that we of the O.U.D.S. were all hospitably entertained at an early luncheon party by an opulent patron of

the budding drama. Champagne flowed and only ceased flowing when it was time to adjourn to the theatre to hear Bouchier as Death (Thanatos), supported by the chorus in his great speech beginning: "Thou knowest my ways." The speech came forth with great eloquence, and the chorus of Canaphoroi (basket bearers), with baskets on their heads, signified their approval (as indeed was their duty) by verbally ratifying the sentiments of Thanatos, and at the same time swaying their heads in rhythmic coincidence with the beats of the iambic verse. On the occasion in question, however, the chorus agreed so emphatically with Thanatos that they swayed not only their heads, but also their bodies, and the audience were astonished at seeing the baskets, which were in unstable equilibrium, beginning to topple over amid the ill-suppressed hilarity of their bearers. I do not think any baskets actually did fall (they mutually propped one another up), but I rarely laughed so much in a theatre as upon that occasion. I hope that Professor Gilbert Murray was not present during this comic performance of the tragedy. I met him occasionally at H. J. Maynard's rooms in St. John's College while we were undergraduates, but have not done so since Oxford, save at the Philosophical Congress, also at Oxford, held quite recently. His versions of the Greek classic poets are not well known to me, as I prefer to read them in the original with the old-fashioned Bohn translation, or better still the Loeb, to help me rapidly over difficult passages. But I have pleasant memories of his serious, kindly face.

The O.U.D.S. brought me into contact with a number of men from different Colleges and with some who did not belong to the University, such as Claude and

Eustace Ponsonby, whom I first met during the Canterbury Cricket Week where I was the guest of Arthur Bouchier. The performances at the theatre and in the field have been so often described that I shall indulge in no repetition of other folk's texts, no digging out of old programmes and menus. Here, as elsewhere, what went on behind the scenes was often more amusing than what happened "in the front of the house." I shall never forget Scrobbies' acting, with a large pocket-handkerchief as sole stage "property," of a leading Canterbury Stroller's performance—when crossing the Channel in stormy weather. The victim, who was present on the occasion, finally rose up in his wrath to grapple with his tormentor and the curtain fell upon this one-act farce. Claude Ponsonby is as fine an actor in modern or restorative comedy as ever I wish to see, and it is a thousand pities that he never accepted the offers made to him by Sir Charles Wyndham.

Poor Alan Mackinnon was the winged Ariel of all our productions, as my friend W. L. Courtney (then fellow and tutor of New College) was our Mentor, Bouchier and he did wonderful things in blue pencil to the text of the Bard, but William Poel had not as yet penetrated to Oxford, or those who knew about him were determined that we should not know. We were too proudly delighted to be producing *Henry IV* at all to give much thought to the sequence or omission of scenes and the retention of the complete text.

I have come now to the end of my three years at Oxford without, I hope, proving tedious by the enumeration of facts and dates that can elsewhere be obtained in profusion. Personally this whole period was like an acting of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Things

just went on happening delightfully, one after the other. Brilliant and amusing people kept appearing from nowhere and doing their very best to charm or to entertain. Mother Earth was herself buoyant beneath our steps, which had in them that delightful spring that my old diplomatic colleague, Charles des Graz, a Cambridge (running) blue declares left him when he left the University. Edward Mitchell-Innes, K.C. and Morris, the University coach, of whom I saw much in those last days at Oxford, will know what I mean. I think, too, that the constantly present acted drama made everyday things assume a sort of glamour. We were walking upon enchanted ground in an enchanted meadow.

For many years I have been able to return to this meadow and to walk there occasionally, and I hope to convey some slight impression of it to the reader.

I left Eton attended by the complete works of Gray duly signed and attested by Dr. Hornby, the head master; from Oxford with the slips of blue paper certifying that I had qualified for the B.A. degree. The reading necessary for a Pass hardly interfered at all with the ordinary course of amusement. At both places I dwelt exactly three years, so that neither had the chance of getting stale, though I sometimes have regretted that I did not spend a fourth year at Eton in order to enjoy the glories of "Pop," and of a higher position in the boats than the modest "Defiance" with which I left. But I am sure that it is well to drain no cup, however sweet, to the dregs, for the *aliquid amari* is certainly there to mingle with it.

I spent a few weeks in London before going to Tours to study French, and saw a good deal of Albert Osborne, Ralph Nevill, and others I had known at

Eton or at Oxford, or both. We frequented the Bristol, which was then the only available restaurant of the present modern type, though such ancient institutions as the Café Royal and Rule's and Romano's of course existed. Another favourite haunt was Long's Hotel, and it was in the billiard-room there that took place my great match of 500 up level for a pony at billiards with Ralph Nevill. We were neither of us great performers, but our methods were, and always have been, different—we frequently played in after days at the St. James's Club, of which I was a member for thirty years. Ralph attracts the attention of the goddess of fortune by smacking her hard, while I try to win her favour with gentler methods. On this occasion we had a small gallery of friends plus, of course, an omniscient marker. We ploughed away through the first four hundred, and the game was called 470 all. Then ensued marvellous ups and downs of luck, ending in the score being called: Nevill 498, Ainslie 499. Fortune was fickle to her gentler votary on this occasion. Nevill smacked her even harder than usual—as hard as he could. The astonished red ball, which had probably never had such a whack in its life, leapt into the air the height of the lamp-shades and colliding with the gas bracket, banged down upon the edge of the table and rolled strenuously about the floor while the white coursed round and round the table like a mad world in miniature. I had won the match by a single point. This was certainly the most amusing and exciting game I ever played, though I have looked on at equally entertaining matches at the club between Nevill and the late General Kelly, whose adjurations addressed to the balls, the general company, and the Higher Powers



of the Universe were interspersed with frequent whiskies and sodas, asides to himself, and comments to the marker upon his dark fate in being eternally condemned to face such an antagonist. Yet the General, although usually the loser, always preferred Nevill as an adversary. The billiard-room in those days was fully attended in the afternoon, but has lately been entirely deserted for the card room. One of its most original frequenters when I first joined the club was old Sir Robert Peel, with his broad-brimmed tall hat perched at an extreme angle over one eye, his flowing cravat *à la D'Orsay*, brick-red complexion, flashing brown eyes, tall and commanding appearance, and portentous frock coat. Thus attired one felt he could bluff the world. On one occasion he engaged in a game with a youthful scion of Israel possessed of millions, recently elected to the club. The game was only for a fiver, but Sir Robert attached as much importance to it as though it had been for five hundred, and when his opponent fluked the red and made a twenty break off it, his comments were loud and long. Shortly after this the red again went in by accident, and again the Hebrew added some points to his score. This caused the brimming cup of Sir Robert's indignation to overflow. Stepping down from the bench upon which he had been sitting, with one hand thrust into the breast of his mighty garment, the other raised in the best House of Commons' manner, he proceeded to pulverize his unfortunate antagonist. I think he accused him of every known crime, in an ever-rising flow of impassioned indignation. His opponent, whom he had approached and fixed with those basilisk eyes was a little sallow man, and he rapidly began to wilt under

this treatment. He cast a piteous glance round the room, but no one made a move towards coming to the rescue. Then he looked at the door and suddenly reached a resolution. Muttering something about coming back directly, he rushed out of the room, and so far as I know, was never again seen in the club, from which he soon resigned. Sir Robert was triumphant on this occasion, and continued his oration to me and one or two others some time after the dramatic departure. Certainly this was an ingenious way of winning a match and five pounds—for Sir Robert insisted on payment.

## CHAPTER VII

### FRANCE AND FISHING

Sir Robert Peel and the Marquis of Clanrikarde—A Famous Jewel—  
Skating and Sliding—Frog-Fishing—Paris—"Throw in the Rod"—  
A Monster—Julian's Best Days.

ONE of the most amusing spectacles of those early days was a passage at arms, upon a political or social subject, between Sir Robert and the Marquis of Clanrikarde. This wonderful old personage was introduced to me by our mutual friend, Charles Edward Jerningham, of whom I saw a great deal between 1895 and 1910. An introduction had to be effected with care, for Clanrikarde, so Jerningham told me, had once turned away from some aspirant for an introduction, shaking his head and saying testily: "I don't want to know him, I don't want to know him," quite loudly enough for the unfortunate individual in question to hear, for he was lurking in the immediate neighbourhood.

The encounter between Sir Robert and the Marquis generally began upon the question of dates. Sir Robert would say, grandiloquently waving an immense oratorical arm: "When I went out of office with Lord Derby in 1865," whereupon Clanrikarde, with steely blue cold eyes fixed upon his victim, would remark in a sharp shrill voice, like the stab of a stiletto: "That's a remarkable statement, as Lord Derby was not in office at all at the time. You are out in your reckoning as to dates by a dozen years or so. As

to the facts, heaven knows how far out you are.—I'm sure you don't yourself." This would infuriate Sir Robert, who would rush forward to impale himself like a bull upon the points of Clanrikarde's memory which was amazingly accurate, and always ended by catching his opponent upon one horn or another of the dilemmas which he provided for Sir Robert, always more than a little hazy about his doings, both before and especially after luncheon.

Clanrikarde's costume was as wonderful as himself, which is saying a good deal. I have often met him on the steps of the Travellers' or the St. James's Club attired in a very seedy old black frock-coat bound with newish broad braid, which threw the greenish tinge of the main garment into high relief, and served partly to conceal his trousers, which are far better described by the word "bags," for they were more like a pair of sacks into which his bare limbs had been popped by some pitying coal heaver than the nether garments of ordinary humanity. He may have worn a shirt, but I never distinctly perceived one, and incline to the belief that he economized in this article and made the under-vest do shirt duty. Blazing in the middle of a bedraggled patched necktie, which looked as if it had been made out of a rag from some old bed-quilt past further service, was a splendid jewel—an Oriental ruby worth some thousands of pounds, surrounded by big brilliants of the finest water. His boots were unlike any footgear I ever saw, resembling derelict coal-boxes with lumps of coal protruding from them, for they were full of bumps—hills and dales—and I never could make out whether they were button-boots or lace-boots because, certainly one of them had a button or two here and there, yet both were pierced

with eyeholes and fastened with string (bootlaces run into money and need renewal every few years). The whole was crowned with a tall hat that had a peculiar gloss upon it, and was adorned with a broad band of silk running half-way up its sides.

This curious little figure was to be seen emerging from his rooms in the Albany about mid-day, and toddling down to one or another of his clubs where he would grumble over the price of provisions. His dinner was like certain Oriental manuscripts, beginning at the end and thence proceeding by way of bananas and ice-creams towards the joint, and concluding with a plate of clear soup. He used often to explain to me that his method of dining gave the internal organs less trouble, as they were able to deal with the more difficult problems presented by the sweets at the start, and found the quiet of the clear soup, at the conclusion, very comforting. Frequently, however, when provisions were scarce and dear, he would content himself for luncheon with the simple penny bun consumed on a bench in the Green Park, prior to dropping in at Christie's for a sale of blue china, of which he possessed a very fine collection. One day, I remember his asking me if I took an interest in it, and on my replying in the affirmative, but regretting that I could never trust my eye, he put his hand into the tail-coat pocket of the garment described (where the buns were also kept) and produced a most beautiful Sèvres saucer of the celebrated turquoise blue. "I always take this saucer to sales," he said, "and compare it with the piece I am thinking of buying. Anything that approaches it is sure to be good." He also mentioned a sad occasion at Christie's when he had directed an agent to go on bidding for a piece of china until he drew out his

pocket handkerchief. The agent was standing facing him the other side of the table in a crowded room. The bidding started briskly, and the vase was soon over £100, which was Clanrikarde's intended limit. He told me that it went to £350 before the hammer fell, and the agent trotted round to say he had bought it for him! The handkerchief had remained in place.

[There were all sorts of tales current at one time as to Clanrikarde's being identical with the notorious money-lender Sanguinetti. Jerningham once told me that Clanrikarde had come up to him and said: "I hear they say I'm Sanguinetti, the money-lender. I don't mind them saying that in the least, but what does rather annoy me is that Sanguinetti is also going about saying that he's not the Marquis of Clanrikarde."

I am not sure if Lord Lascelles, the lucky nephew, now possesses the celebrated jewel known as the Merman. This jewel has been once exhibited in London, and consists of a single pearl which, by a freak of Nature, is shaped exactly like the torso of an adult man, beautifully modelled. The Italian craftsman, some Leonardo da Vinci, added the splendid angry head of the sea-denizen with its golden curls and the curved tail of green enamel, with its pendant pearls and rubies. The whole produces a marvellous effect of completeness and vibrates with the life given to it by the artist. Years ago it was in the Uffizi collection at Florence whence it mysteriously disappeared and was not heard of for many years, until, as Clanrikarde told me, and I have no reason to doubt his veracity, it turned up in India and was offered to Lord Canning, who was then Viceroy. He bought and kept it with two other treasures in a despatch-box, which came back with him when he returned to this

country. These were a jewel of astonishing beauty, known as the Emperor of China's seal, said to have excelled the Merman—and Queen Victoria's love-letters. The three were together in his despatch-box in Hanover Square when he was taken ill, and drove down to the seaside—I think it was Hastings. The box was handed to him in his carriage. He never returned, and the Emperor's seal and the love-letters disappeared. Lady Waterford declared that he certainly had them with him at the time of his death. By the terms of Canning's will, Clanrikarde became the owner but was obliged to sell the jewel, which was bought back by his father and thus returned to his possession. He told me that Rothschild had offered him up to £9,000 for the jewel, which he had refused, adding that he would not accept £10,000. One more reminiscence of the jewel's adventures from his lips. He told me that on one occasion Lady Canning went to a drawing-room and by some inadvertence on the part of her coachman was put down at the ordinary entrance. Having no means of making herself known there she started on foot to find the *entrée* entrance, but soon got lost in the crowd, where she was observed by a policeman, who came up to her and politely saluting asked if he should lead her to the *entrée* entrance. She gratefully accepted and when they arrived there told him he might call in Hanover Square the next day, where there would be a little present awaiting him for his timely guidance. "And before we part, I should like to know how you guessed I was seeking the *entrée* entrance?" "Oh, your ladyship, the moment I saw them pearls and rubies I knew you must have the entry." She was wearing the famous jewel.

Clanrikarde had been, in early life, a diplomatist at

the Grand Ducal Court in Florence. He often held forth about Ireland and the way he had been let down by the Conservative Government. He was bitter as to the treatment meted out to him by the late Lord Salisbury, who had, he said, always been prepared to sacrifice him to catch the popular vote. He gave me a minute account of interviews with other statesmen now living, to which it will perhaps be possible to refer in greater detail in the course of a few years, as they form an interesting commentary upon the state of Irish politics at the time. Clanrikarde had a good deal of wit, and was by no means devoid of humour. He was said to have always been snubbed by old Lady Cork, his sister, whom I met several times, but never heard say anything approaching in interest the pungent epigrams and flowing stores of accurate knowledge of her brother. I never saw them together, but there must have been some psychical disequilibrium between the two, for Clanrikarde would have been excellent company in the most cultivated society. As to his Irish estates and the accusations of rack-renting, he told me that these estates had already been enormously reduced in rental when he inherited them, and that he was invited to make further enormous reductions upon these reductions. He said that he was determined not to be robbed, and that his tenants branded him as a merciless landlord because he refused to allow them to rob him. I have put his side of the case because one has always heard the other stated with immense vehemence but lack of documentary support. "Give a dog a bad name" was certainly true of Clanrikarde, who, no doubt, was astonishingly mean, and would rather have died than have casually lent anyone a fiver, though he possessed over three million sterling, but I have always



heard that on great occasions he was capable of great things—that, for instance, he intervened to save his brother from bankruptcy, paying all his debts. He was a devotee of the old-fashioned figure skating, and very fond of marking out a few square yards for himself at Prince's skating rink, in which to practise his quaint little figures, circling round his top hat. He very much objected to intruders upon these sacred precincts, and I remember on one occasion the testy old gentleman kept muttering "D——n, d——n," in a stage whisper every time Lady Randolph Churchill brushed past him. This went on for some time, when suddenly she swooped down upon him when he had one bulbous boot in the air and sent him flying in a sitting position along the ice. *Facilis decimus Averni.*

But I must return for a few moments to that earlier period when I was learning French at Tours. We were a large party of young Englishmen at La Gruette, round Monsieur Crèmière's hospitable board. Mostly the aspirants for French speaking were younger than I, and they vied with one another in practising—the English language. With Henry Bell I made friends and together we explored the neighbourhood in search of lepidoptera or played tennis at the Croizats', where the tricolor flag waved on one side of the net, the Union Jack on the other. Altogether a delightful time among the acacias and the vines, alive with sunlight and countless shades of green. There was also a terrace, with a view downward on the Loire. Here, on the long June evenings, we would stride up and down smoking cigarettes and discussing our plans for the future. George Crawley came out later, and joined me in a circular visit to the famous Châteaux, so much described of late years that I will not dwell

upon them here beyond saying that I preferred the veiled seclusion of Azay-le-Rideau to the more splendid display of Blois, Amboise and Genonceaux. Crawley spoke quite good French, and I made my first start in the language with him. But it was evident that I should not acquire the desired facility unless I went to some place where English was not spoken, for I found that I soon exhausted all common themes with amiable, obese Madame Crèmière and her peripatetic husband, who had seen so many generations of young Englishmen pass before his eyes and with all exchanged the like platitudes. He was constantly pottering about the garden and the vines in list slippers, sometimes with a watering pot, at others with a walking-stick in his hand. His charming niece, Juliette, used to appear at meals, and sometimes it was possible to take a few first steps in Gallic compliments with her. I left them to follow the light. Delightful days and pleasant, homely, kindly people. How true it is that humanity never knows when it is well off.

Being a "brother of the angle" I naturally looked round for a chance of luring the wary fin into the basket. The Loire, of course, presented opportunities, and of these I availed myself in moderation, for it was some distance from the house, and the sport, when obtained, was rather of the negative than the positive sort—I mean there was a deal of waiting for a minimum of bites, which made me greet Jean Richepin's verse read in the sleepy punt, with much approval:—

. . . le pêcheur à la ligne  
Qui vit et meurt vierge et martyr.

Virgin of fish we certainly often were, though our waiting in the comfortable recesses of the barge-like

arrangement provided by the fisherman did not amount to martyrdom.

But during my visit to Azay-le-Rideau I made the discovery of a new kind of angling which I can heartily recommend to those in search of air, exercise and amusement. Strolling through a lush meadow in the neighbourhood of that enchanted palace, I came upon a blouse-clad rustic armed with a long and tapering hazel pole, intently gazing at the opposite side of a deep broad ditch. He was standing on the very edge, his clogs imbedded in loose-strife, marsh mallows, forget-me-nots, marigolds and clover. Willows overgrew the trickling water, and countless twining grasses and branches almost entirely concealed it from the view. One inferred its presence only from this rich variety of vegetable life that covered the slopes of the banks and ran right across from side to side. By peering between the boughs of willow and alder, it became possible, here and there, to detect a small space of water unconcealed. The rustic stood on the bank gazing at his bait, and I gazed at him. A slight motion agitated the point of his tapering pole. Suddenly he jerked it high in the air, and to my amazed amusement I observed that the bait was a piece of red flannel rolled into a ball, and the fish—a frog—at that moment flying through the air with the red flannel sticking to the minute teeth in his jaw. When it fell to the ground in the deep green of the grass the shock jerked out the ball of flannel, and Master Grenouille, quite uninjured by his sudden flight skyward, started off full tilt for his native ditch. The rustic at once threw down his pole and bolted in pursuit—it was a grand handicap—and froggie's long-legged leaps were one too many

for the heavy wooden clogs of my friend ; that one got safe to cover, and there was no possibility of luring him forth again. The only thing to be done was to move a few paces down the ditch and find another likely looking eye of water amid the herbs. This being achieved, I observed that the method is simple, and that it was genuine angling—a luring of the saurian to the basket, not a forcing him to enter it willy-nilly. And I observed, too, that there went considerable art and craft to the successful capture of the succulent vocalists—(spring chicken are not in it with *Grenouilles à la mode de Touraine*). The red flannel must be just the right size, neither too small nor too big, and it must further be properly, not too tightly nor too loosely, rolled. The string to which it is attached must be strong, because it often catches in bushes and needs some force to disentangle. Then there is a good deal of art in imparting just the correct motion to the fascinating crimson mouthful. Froggie is easily alarmed too, and one must stand back from the precise place where the event is going to mature, or the prey will remain *perdu* among the sedges. Frequently in this kind of fishing, alone of all the kinds I have practised, one's victim inhabits the same element as oneself, and is seated comfortably on the bank when one approaches. He watches the amusing movements of the crimson circle for some moments before he decides to leap down into the water and swallow the lovely thing. This he does, not crudely and all in one, but boldly leaps to within about four inches and then approaches gradually (if the bait be properly agitated) before finally deciding to gulp it down. When he does at last take it into his mouth one must give him comfortable time to get it well in, and select,

for the supreme flight heavenward, the psychological moment when the minute roughnesses of the flannel are in contact with his minute teeth. Even when one thinks one has judged well he sometimes turns out to have imperfectly swallowed the bait, and consequently becomes detached from it when only a few feet from the bank. In that case even more rapid measures are necessary, and the odds are heavily on the frog. I have often almost fallen down with laughing to observe the frantic plunge made by my friends after the elusive frogs, so frequently ending in the escape of the latter. I introduced the fashion of frog-fishing among the other young men at La Gruette, and we would often be four or five at a few yards distance from one another. We generally brought home a good basketful after a morning's efforts. These are, of course, the edible frogs, larger than those little green beauties, the sybarites of the olives, that make the noise of an evening and live upon small flies. The advantage of this kind of fishing is that out of *one* capture you *always* get the excitement of *two* captures, and if you are imprudent enough to peep into the closed basket before delivering it in the kitchen you may quite well see your hard-won luncheon departing in all directions, with incredible celerity, to safe cover. On the whole, I place a good day with frog somewhere between lamprey and salmon fishing—it is more strenuous than either.

Despite these fascinations I decided that I must go to Paris, and there complete the building of which the scaffolding only had been laid. In the Rue de la Santé, at the extreme end of the Boulevard St. Michel, I found what I required in the persons of Monsieur and Madame Bouchardot, a Protestant *pasteur* and his wife, who knew not a word of English. I must speak

French or starve. I started a translation of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* into English, which was corrected by the *pasteur*, I making rapid strides, and in the course of a few weeks was able to join in my host's conversation with his wife and their friends, and had begun to read right and left in French literature, wisely accepting the suggestions of Monsieur Bouchardot and beginning with Racine and Molière. I remember at this time also studying Fourier's *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements* and his notions of the phalanstery and the ideal life of share-and-share-alike, which, when he wrote had not assumed the noxious form given to it by the Jew Marx. I completed my studies with a little harmless light exercise at the *Bal Bullier*, which was just round the corner, and gave me glimpses of the last of the *Grisettes* and of Parisian life that were rather surprising to one accustomed to the staid joys of Albion. From that date I have always kept in touch with France and with French literature, to which I owe so much.

I returned by the Isle of Wight to England, and spent a few exquisite days at Shanklin, which has ever since been to me as a shrine. I have elsewhere given expression to its "tumbled wealth of green," and to the great sapphire eye of the sea as glimpsed through boughs swaying to the breeze of June and to the moments there, when Nature shrouds her face and squadrons of white rain come riding across the Chine. I can always "re-capture the rapture" by returning there, and this I have also been able to do with other less exquisite scenes.

That summer and autumn of 1886 I passed at Delgaty, where I caught a number of salmon in the Deveron, and did some shooting, but my brother Julian, who followed me at Eton, has always been the expert in the latter branch of sport.

My father was at one time a keen salmon-fisher, and had two remarkable adventures, the first at Laithers, where I have often fished. On the occasion in question, a big salmon was rising close to him, in the late autumn, at the bottom of the pool known as the Turning Wheel, which is backed by a steep, wooded bank, and trees in places grow out over the water. One of these was just before him, as by a rare fluke his fly struck the side of a rising fish as it was in the air, and caught hold. The fish made a bee line at a great pace down-stream, the line tearing out of the reel as the fish reached the rapids about thirty yards below. My father held on as hard as he could without breaking the line, but nothing could stop the fish. He turned to Terras, his head-keeper, who was just above him, and shouted : “Shall I throw in the rod?” Terras confirmed the suggestion, and the heavy eighteen-foot rod disappeared in the calm, deep, foam-flecked water where the fish had been hooked. They then rushed down the bank to the rapids to see if there were any sign of the fish, but nothing was visible ; for travelling the pace he was no doubt the rod had been before them. Over a hundred yards of line was out when it was thrown in, and the fish must be in the pool beyond the rapids—the rod and reel might, of course, have stuck in a stone or been carried against the bank. They walked down to the pool below, known as Burn End, from a stream that flows into it further down. Its black, swirling waters burst over a rock at the further side and continued for quite a quarter of a mile without an intervening shallow. The case appeared hopeless :

The waters wild closed o'er my child,  
And I was left lamenting.

So they stood, rodless, surveying the scene of the disappearance, and were just turning away to harness the dogcart and drive home when one of the Harveys, who own Carnousie, the property that faces Laithers on the other side of the river, appeared on the opposite bank to fish. He was armed with some heavy tackle and leads to draw across the bottom and drag out any diseased fish there might be in the pool—and presumably any others also! Be this as it may, my father informed him that he had lost his rod and believed it to be lying at the bottom of the pool. No doubt the fish had broken away long ago. Harvey thereupon made a cast across the stream with his bunch of big hooks, and at the third attempt said: "I feel your rod." Slowly, slowly he raised it to the surface: my father waded across the shallow above and joined him, joyfully gripping the dripping butt of green ash, which had passed through its ordeal unscratched. He wound up fifty yards or so of line, never suspecting for a moment that his fish would still be there, but what was his astonishment suddenly to feel it tugging away, and as fresh as if it had just been hooked. He landed it in twenty minutes; weight about twenty pounds.

Personally, I was never fortunate in the Turning Wheel, but Stewart of Laithers told me that, on one occasion, he was fishing behind some of the big rocks which break its bubbling surface at the top of the pool. There he rose and "rugged" an immense fish lying in to the further side in comparatively shallow water. Vainly he tried again, and had just finished fishing the lower part of the pool when the youngest of the Harveys, a Cambridge blue and an athlete, appeared at the top to fish it from the Carnousie side.



"I've 'rugged' a monster at the top of the pool," shouted "Laithers" to his friend: "he won't look at me again, but perhaps he may be tempted from your side." He came and sat down opposite the place where he had risen the fish, while Harvey began at the very top and fished it carefully down to the critical cast. He was "in" to something at once that felt exactly like the rock, which was just visible above the surface? Was it the rock? Harvey put on a heavy strain with his powerful rod, but there was no response from the other end. The line remained absolutely taut and tense. He held on like this for some minutes. "I doubt it's the rock," shouted Laithers to Carnousie with the faintest suspicion of a piscatorial chuckle. "No, I'm *sure* it's the fish," shouted back Carnousie: "it gave an unmistakable tug, but I can't move it. It must be tied to the rock." "Give line and go a little below him; you're bound to move him then." This manœuvre was tried but proved absolutely ineffective: the monster kept his position without any apparent difficulty, and refused to budge an inch. For twenty minutes Harvey held on, and then became desperate. He decided that he would try to gaff the fish where it was. The water was not very deep. Winding up very carefully and keeping the full strain on the fish, he entered the rapid stream in which he just managed to keep a footing, with the rod in his left hand resting against his side, the gaff in his right. He proceeded thus about ten yards, and at last saw the dark outline of the salmon lying just below the rock in about five feet of water. He himself was standing in over four feet when he made a long aim and got the iron of the gaff over his back and into him. Had he not been in tip-top training, with muscles

like steel, he would never have dragged the great fish to the gravelly beach. It was all he could do in that rapid current, although a salmon is, of course, rendered practically helpless when the gaff is driven well home. I have a photo of the fish, a clean-run salmon of forty-five pounds.

My brother's feats in the way of game shooting are really surprising and at one time he was looked upon as the best shot in the north of Scotland ! He told me that his best day's pheasant shooting was at our neighbour's, Sir George Abercomby's, at Forglen House. On this occasion he shot seventy-seven high pheasants at one stand without a miss. Flight shooting at woodpigeons coming in to roost always amused me, but my own achievements were as nothing to his seventy-five, sixty-five and fifty-five by himself in a couple of hours on three successive Wednesdays at Craigston Castle, also within a walk of Delgaty. Here, in the tiny burn which runs past the ancient Castle, from which it is separated only by a gentle grassy slope, I remember as a little boy of nine coming over to fish with a worm, for trout. Francis Pollard Urquhart kindly had the mill-water above turned on for us to darken the water and soon Ada, Leonora, Octavia Pollard Urquhart, my brother Percy and I were busily tossing yellow troutlings on to the soft, thick, velvety grass. I went alone downstream below the bridge where we had been told the fishing was not so good. The water here ran darkly smooth and deeper between close banks. I cast my worm rather too near the opposite bank as I thought, and feared it would catch in the meadow-sweet and other herbage which over-arched the currents. I almost jerked it out and made another cast. It stopped travelling down-stream. I struck. Was it in the roots



WAITING FOR A WOODCOCK.  
Julian Ainslie, the author's younger brother.



of a plant? It felt like it. Yet no, there was too heavy a tug, when I pulled, to be a submerged weed. I had never felt anything like it before. Suddenly all my doubts were dispelled by the line darting down-stream like an arrow. I rushed after it with hasty steps through the long, high grasses, which had not been cut in this portion of the stream where we were not expected to fish. Suddenly it turned the other way and went up-stream with equal rapidity. Thus up and down it coursed with the little boy after it, panting with excitement and shouting for all he was worth. But at first no one heard him : the party had adjourned to the Castle for tea. At last, however, a woodcutter in a neighbouring thicket emerged and came to the rescue with a landing-net which he ran to secure at the house. I had seen nothing of the fish, though a more expert angler would have certainly done so. He kept boring along on the very bottom. The woodcutter was certainly very adroit, for he quickly slipped the net under him and hoisted out what appeared to my enraptured eyes to be a monster. He turned the scale at just under three pounds, and I shall always remember the pathetic remark of the keeper Will, that he had fished the burn for twenty years and more without making such a capture and now a young gentleman had come and caught the triton. I was filled and thrilled with pride.

To revert for a moment to my brother Julian, his best day's general shooting was in Norfolk, when he rented Congham Hall, and with four other guns got "470 pheasants, 170 brace of partridges and a lot of duck and teal."

We had at one time a delightful neighbour, Mr. Bacon, an American, connected, I believe, with the

Vanderbilt family. The story runs that soon after he had rented Netherdale on the Deveron, the keeper wrote in the spring to New York, where he was detained on business, to ask if they should try for salmon in his absence. "No," he is said to have cabled in reply, "keep salmon till I return in the autumn." That was in the early days, but he soon learnt salmon lore and his hospitality knew no bounds.

To dwell a few further moments on sport, my brother tells me that the most comical experience he remembers was at a covert shoot at Mountblairry, years ago, when a beater was accidentally hit in the face. He was rather badly hurt and my brother, who had not fired, was doing what he could for him, when the head-keeper came up full of the cares of the day. He looked at the man lying on the grass, and said: "Oh! fire-shot are ye? Aweel! Awa back tae ma hoose and wash yer face, and come back as quick as ye can"—and the man did it! I hasten to add that the victim was none the worse for the mishap, and was duly rewarded by the pepperer. Reckless shooting is the abomination of desolation in sport.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DANCING AND DUCKING

The Old Lord Fife—Scoones and Diplomacy—Sam Lewis Gambling—Reel Dancing in Scotland—Society *in excelsis*—"Ball Dancing—Embassy Ball at Rome—Orloff—The Ducking of the Princess—The Tears of Poland—Pageant *in excelsis*.

IN East Aberdeenshire we suffered considerably at one time from this affliction in the shape of a neighbour (now dead) who was a popular and agreeable man, and had commanded a regiment with distinction in earlier life. He is said to have been the only man who had shot another in the soles of his feet. He achieved this distinction by telling the keeper at a rabbit-shoot that he had wounded a rabbit which had crawled into a hole close by. While the keeper was lying flat on the ground with his arm down the hole trying to reach the rabbit, another rabbit appeared and made for the same refuge. The Colonel immediately fired both barrels at it, with the result above mentioned.

On one occasion, at his own shoot, he proved himself so dangerous in the morning that his guests declined to come out after lunch to shoot the rabbit warren. They finally relented after the Colonel had given a solemn promise that he would remain on the other side of a substantial wall. They made a start, but were soon appalled to find that shot was mysteriously coming in all directions into the line of guns and beaters. It was then discovered that the Colonel was walking along the top of the wall shooting

indiscriminately at all that moved. He once remarked at a shoot that he had been fortunate enough to kill a right and left of roe-deer. At the pick-up it was found that what he had really killed was one roe-deer and his host's brown retriever.

The old Lord Fife of an earlier generation, whom I have already mentioned in relation to his whisky and his wig, was also reputed to have been apt to discharge his right barrel at anything moving. On one occasion the object in question happened to be a beater's yellow gaiter. His lordship aimed straight at what he believed to be the yellow rabbit, and bowled it over in the dense fern, giving it as he remarked, the other barrel "to put it out of its misery" when he observed that the undergrowth continued to be violently agitated.

"Adventures are to the adventurous" is one of the truest of saws and when I returned to London, after visiting my parents in Aberdeenshire, I set out on several. The first of these was the frequentation of Scoones's cramming establishment for the Diplomatic Service. It was in Garrick Street, and B. Scoones, the manager, proprietor and presiding genius, was a most amiable and delightful man. Bright dark eyes in a sallow face sparkled with life and intelligence as he stood before one of the grates of his many lecture-rooms and instructed some thirty young gentlemen how they should all obtain the five or six vacancies likely to become available in that career. Heads I win, tails I don't lose, might be said of the excellent Scoones and his establishment: he did but profit legitimately by the ludicrous system of so-called "competition" examination by nomination for the Diplomatic Service. We were all kept on tenterhooks prior to an examination as to whether we



should receive "nominations" or not. These were really all in the gift of the Hon. Eric Barrington, private secretary to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, at that time the late Lord Salisbury. Of the latter, many are the stories current as to his immense capacity for failing to recognize even those with whom he was in daily contact. Thus he is reported to have asked on one occasion who was the "rather agreeable" young man who had twice brought dispatches to Hatfield for signature. At first there was some doubt as to who this might be, but eventually it was discovered that my old friend, Henry Foley, one of the junior secretaries, was the person in question. He had been in attendance on his Lordship for two years.

But funnier than this (though I fear that to some this anecdote may be a *marron glacé*) is the description of that day when a neighbouring squire dropped in to luncheon. Lady Salisbury was rather apprehensive that her husband might fail to recognize this somewhat obscure person, and was greatly relieved to find when Lord Salisbury entered the dining-room a little later that he immediately engaged their homespun guest in conversation, which he kept up vigorously till the end of the repast, when the squire rather hastily took his leave. Lord Salisbury then casually remarked: "I was glad Lord Roberts dropped in to luncheon to-day; but I fear he is not what he was intellectually. He appeared to me to be remarkably vague as to our military dispositions in Egypt, and his views on Indian questions seemed even more nebulous. But we all grow older." I believe that it was thought advisable not to disillusionize him as to the identity of his late guest.

These anecdotes are no doubt founded upon an inattention to the externals of daily intercourse on the

part of Salisbury, but that he was well aware of the main point came under my own direct observation when I was on the late Sir Edmund Monson's staff at Athens. Sir Edmund was an amiable Chief, though his habit of perpetually quill driving with a quill that did not run but galloped across the foolscap, kept us all too busy in the Chancellery on many a balmy afternoon. Sir Edmund was far more interested in Greek politics than was Lord Salisbury, and he would often metaphorically wring his hands and tear his hair over the apathy displayed by the Secretary of State towards the iniquities of Delyannis and the manœuvres of Tricoupis. But when real trouble began to brew, and a Græco-Turkish war was threatened, telegrams came pouring in from the previously apathetic Secretary of State, who was doubtless well aware of Sir Edmund's quill-driving propensities.

I have always admired and wished I dared to emulate that trait in the late Lord Salisbury of ignoring all club bills. Years ago I was a member of the Junior Carlton Club, and when the Senior opposite was closed Lord Salisbury used occasionally to honour us with his presence at luncheon at the Junior. He used always to stalk majestically away when he had finished as though he were in his private house and the steward never dared present him with the bills, which used to accumulate until they were paid off in a bunch by his secretary. A delightful relic of days when no club servant would present a tray of silver change until the silver had been washed. Conceive a trayful of well-washed Bradburys. That pulp exactly represents our present democracy as compared with the clear-cut coin of the past.

To return to the diplomatic examination and the

arbiter of the nominations, we naturally all paid court to Eric Barrington so far as we were able : the rooms at Scoones's re-echoed with : "Eric has asked me to lunch," or "I saw Eric in Pall Mall, yesterday," from the lips of those whom he was supposed especially to favour. I think Barrington did his best to make a pint bottle contain a magnum—certainly there were a good many nominations for each examination, but the way adopted for those who were particularly wanted by the Foreign Office was to fix an examination suddenly for a particular date so selected as to suit the favoured candidates and to exclude any dangerous competitors who were permitted to cut one another's throats on a later occasion. Another favourite dodge was to carry the name of the desired one right to the top of those who had failed to obtain a place in a competition—say make him come out fifth where there were four vacancies—then when a fifth vacancy occurred the pet was popped into it without more ado. Other devices were also adopted for increasing the chances of certain candidates. Thus I remember, when I was at Scoones's, that just before an examination Sir Augustus Paget, Ambassador at Vienna, whose son was a fine German scholar, wrote to the Foreign Office to say that 300 marks was not, in his opinion, sufficient for German. A couple of hundred marks were at once added to that subject.

The same sort of thing went on for years under the successors of Eric Barrington : it was a question of paying successful court to the private secretary of the Secretary of State, not only for "nominations," but also for posts when in the Service. My father belonged to the golden spoon-fed days before the competition for nominations of unspeakably worthy people connected with Radi-

cal M.P.'s. They had merely to prove they knew French and German and could write a dispatch in those days. The governing class throughout Europe—socially there was no other Continent—understood one another *à demi mot* and “ran the show” to perfection. Prior to the age of those born with the golden spoon in their mouths was that of those *qui se donnaient la peine de naître*—cardinals in toddling clothes. As Clanrikarde used to whisper to me, with his wonderful boots resting on the rim of the fender in the silence room at the St. James's Club: “The mischief was done at the time of the French Revolution: a little firmness then and we should have been in the saddle for many generations. Now nothing can stop the landslide.” Will the soft-handed horny-headed sons of soil led by Mr. Clynes provide a happier world? Very possibly,—for the Clynes' family and friends, but not for humanity as a whole. They will be dreadfully expensive. We shall return bankrupt to a benevolent tyranny by a very long and a very weary road.

Studies at Scoones's fully occupied our time during the day, but youth is rich in vitality and some of us broke away to found a Bohemian Club combining with others less afflicted with examinations. This club was the Corinthian in York Street, St. James's Square, on the left as you enter the Square, and I still possess the certificate of my founder's share, duly countersigned by old John Hollingshead of the Gaiety. Hollingshead was a great ally of George Edwardes—Gaiety George—and the level of culture attained by the latter caterer for the public taste may be gauged by a delightful remark he once made in my hearing. It was at a supper-party at Romano's that some one began talking about Shakespeare, a subject which had

few attractions for Edwardes, who listened, rather sleepily, until the remark was made: "I'm sure one could find it in Holinshed." Edwardes at once woke up with: "Lordy, I never knew old John had any truck with Shakespeare." Edwardes was a very pleasant person to meet if you were on the side of the knife handle, as I have heard Russians put the possession of the pull, but the other face of the metal was not so pleasing. His true personality is exactly hit off with the French *faux bonhomme*. Certainly he could be most agreeable when it suited his book and there was a good slice of cake for himself and, of course, we young men found it very useful to be friends with the manager of the Gaiety, and even with his myrmidons, Pallant and others, who could speak the Open Sesame that let us past the Cerberus of the stage-door. I remember in this connection a story that makes me smile as I write it, of how I introduced the fair Isadora Duncan to a dear old hunting friend (long dead). He promptly became enamoured of the Terpsichore of California, and followed exactly the correct tradition by driving up the following night to the stage-door with an immense bouquet. Unaccustomed to the ways of theatres, he pushed past the stage-doorkeeper's box before the latter had time to ask him whom he wanted. He began wandering hopelessly about the wings in search of her dressing-room and at last ran against the Cerberus, who had pursued but lost him in the intricacies of a forest of scenes and stage accessories. Then ensued an epic duel of words which very nearly ended in blows, the man rudely shouting to the intruder to come back, the intruder damning his eyes and continuing his search, followed by the infuriated stage-doorkeeper. Finally

my friend said: "Nothing will make me leave this theatre until I have handed my bouquet to Miss Isadora Duncan." "She's not here," shouted the man with desperate calm: "Come along out of this." "She *is* here and I *shall* find her," replied my friend. "She asked me to call to-night at the Lyceum and ask for her." "But *this aint the Lyceum*—it's the Gaiety; the Lyceum's just opposite. If you hadn't a rushed past me like that you'd have saved us both a deal of trouble," shouted the Cerberus, who recovered his temper when he found the laugh was on his side. My friend joined in it and tipped him a sovereign, which led Cerberus to add in gratitude: "You may come 'ere and look for Miss Duncan at that price any night of the week you like, and if so be you can't find 'er, maybe you'll find another to suit you—we sort o' specializes in 'em 'ere ye know."

The Corinthian Club formed a delightful place of meeting when it was first started: there was a magnificent ballroom with a balcony overlooking it and a cosy lounge behind that, a dining-room on the other side of the entrance hall. We had a capital private band, and in the afternoons and evenings it was very gay. Albert Osborne, A. H. E. Grahame, Victor Morier, Talbot and Cuthbert Clifton, Leslie Melville and many other friends and acquaintances, mostly of Eton, Harrow, Oxford or Cambridge formed a nucleus round which gathered most of the young men from eighteen to the early twenties. The ladies were recruited chiefly from the Gaiety and other theatres of that sort. They were much more Bohemian and far less pretentious in some respects than the middle-class chorus ladies of to-day. There was, of course, a great deal of money spent, chiefly by those who did not possess any. This

paradox was explained by the near neighbourhood of Sam Lewis, whose offices were almost opposite the Bristol Restaurant (since fallen from its high estate). Sam had a cheerful, jovial personality and used frequently to remark semi-paternally: "I like to see the young 'uns have a good time." He was reputed (truly, I have no doubt) to do immense deals with Continental magnates in need of cash, but he did not disdain even younger sons, who might (who can tell?) succeed to thousands any day. To these he would often advance a monkey or so on their simple signatures. He would even lend small sums of money to young men in good regiments who would go back and extol his generosity at mess, and thus perhaps lead some of their wealthier brother officers into his net. Sam was a capital *raconteur* and I have often thought what a wonderful secret history of London in the 'eighties and 'nineties he and the solicitor, George Lewis, might have compiled. Between them they must have known *all* the secrets. Of course such a history would be impossible and both these—experts—were honourable men. Sam was an *habitué* of Monte Carlo, where he lost many of the thousands he made in London. One day the *chef de partie* at *trente et quarante* objected to Sam's putting his feet on one chair while he sat on another, whereupon Sam came out in the best Cockney with: "I've paid ye over a 'undred thousand to 'ave the right to put my feet on this blasted chair and I'm ruddy well going to do it."

Lord Frederick Hamilton, in one of his interesting volumes, describes the young men of his day as wearing the "colours" of the lady of their heart in the stalls of the Gaiety, and that one young man pushed his infatuation for Miss Duncan (black and white) to

the extent of having black and white kid gloves made for the purpose at the theatre. We of a later date never went to those extremes of dress, though a good many people got very much into debt for the sake of their Twinkle Toes (to borrow my friend Burke's pretty title for his admirable study). Some of the Twinkle Toes were worth it, and I remember one of them, Lydia Manton, a charming little sapphire-eyed brunette, who took her own life because the man she liked had left her in order to marry.

There were other Bohemian resorts of the time which we occasionally patronized, such as the Gardenia in Leicester Square, a long, low-roofed floor with supper-room above. Here the company of both sexes was much more mixed, and though the fun was fast and furious, the early mornings spent there inclined one to return to the more civilized Corinthians, or to Evan's—now the National Sporting Club. This was a charming resort during the few years of its existence. The same class as frequented the Corinthians came here: light-hearted Bohemian maidens, who were out for a good time without much afterthought. It was a club, and most of us belonged to both. I was not one of the founders of Evan's: it was generally said to be run by the old Duke of Beaufort. At any rate, he was there every evening with Miss Connie Gilchrist and glad to introduce her to young men who could dance well. Evan's afterwards became the New Club, and I have also attended the Caledonian Ball there. Indeed, I think that was the only occasion I ever wore the kilt south of the Tweed. Our family being Grant Duff, we have the right to wear both the Grant and the Duff tartans. Personally I affect the former. The tartans of the clans are, by many, supposed to represent



primordial antiquity in costume, but modern research has, I believe, proved that their origin cannot be traced very far back. In the old days, when the Highlands were mostly within what were called the "Rough Bounds," communications were difficult and the complicated patterns displayed in many tartans would have been impossible to execute for lack of dyes. A reel danced out of the kilts seems a prosaic enough affair to the onlooker, but it's pleasure taken in grim earnest for the Celt. Many years ago, at Delgaty, during a ball given after the big covert-shoot, I remember some unfortunate Sassenach engaging himself in the mazes of the reel without a sufficiently close acquaintance with the correct way of changing arms when the men dance together in the centre and the ladies look on. He managed to scrape, somehow, through the slow time, but when the quick time began with the usual shouting and the spirit of ecstatic revel as Highlanders—Lords of Creation—had entered the souls of the dancers, he kept continually giving the wrong arm to the other man and getting in his way at the critical moment. At last this became too much to bear, and the Scot in question took hold of the peccant stranger round the waist and hurled him to the side of the room, with the recommendation to bide in yon easy chair and keep out of the reel! The Scot then took up his dancing and went through the quick time then in the centre alone to his own satisfaction, though to the amazement of the partner of his *vis-à-vis*, who remained a disconsolate figure until rejoined by a sadder and a wiser man.

These anecdotes and happenings may appear to have but little connection with the great happening of the examination to enter the Diplomatic Service, nor indeed

have they, save that they were events taking place at about the same time and are to my mind less tiresome than the chronicling of crammed French and card indexes, which filled the other part of my life for some years. I did not get my nomination for diplomacy until I was twenty-four.

I shall therefore make no scruple of diverging from the macadam of examination to the Adams—and Eves—of the ballroom. We, of course, received plenty of social invitations during this period in London. Young men are always in request at dances, and we were well aware of the fact. Dancing was not the fashion in the early 'nineties as it is now. We never thought of dancing in the afternoon, and if we did go to a ball in Society I am afraid that most of us went after 11 p.m. with an eye to supper, after perhaps a turn or two in the ballroom. That we did not care much for dancing at that time is not surprising, seeing that most of us had but rudimentary ideas of the art and believed that all was done when we had hauled our partners round the room, more or less in time, to the tune of waltz or polka. Reversing, and all kinds of "American tricks," were looked upon as bad form as they were likely to impede the progress of those who were less dexterous at getting round without too much bumping into people. Then I fear that the happy-go-lucky attractions of Bohemia made even the slight restrictions of Society ballrooms irksome. What one was practically free of at the time I first began to go about London was the type of *man* who "ought not to have been asked," as being outside the pale of Society or of Bohemia, which was as exclusive in its own way as Society as regards the men who frequented it. Nowadays, I constantly hear that

altogether undesirable men have been brought to the best houses by women in Society who ought to know better, and indeed do know better, but being unable to obtain the genuine article accept the other rather than go without. Any one at all doubtful used to be extremely well looked after and sharply criticized and kept in order, whereas now there are too many of them—the social level has declined with the advent of the democracy which has risen above its former level. The memoirs of older men and women who I have met make it clear that, before my time, both Society and Upper Bohemia were much more strictly guarded than when I first knew them: now it is the Deluge.

The splendid paying fancy balls of to-day were not known in the 'eighties and 'nineties, at least, on anything like the scale. We British are in any case not very good at manœuvring in masks, and I remember, at a private masked ball given at Holland House, a good many years ago, that a woman I knew who had been to masked balls abroad and understood the art of accosting and intriguing other masks, was severely snubbed by several of the men and women whom she addressed, and either knew personally or knew all about. It was absurd to object to her doing this, as no one could have obtained an entrance uninvited, as all the masks had to be doffed a moment for private inspection on arrival. The reason why the mask is not popular with us is that although people are willing to dress up in something becoming or moderately bizarre, they always wish to *remain themselves* and resent conversing with any one not on their visiting list.

By far the finest masked and fancy balls that I have

attended have been abroad ; the most beautiful was given by our representative at Rome, my friends, Sir Rennel and Lady Rodd, the next most beautiful at Paris, by the Princesse de Léon. Both eclipsed in artistic merit the stately magnificence of the Devonshire House fancy ball, the reason being this—at Devonshire House nearly everyone was British and therefore not naturally artistic, whereas in Rome three-quarters were Italians to the manner born in matters of art, and in Paris, at the Princesse's, I suppose that not half a dozen British were asked : the French were the cream of the Faubourg St. Germain, with a sprinkling of a few foreign diplomatists.

Both at the Rodds' and at the Princesse de Léon's, those who were invited had regularly to rehearse their entry for some weeks before the event—the ball was frequently postponed, and some of the Italians were said to have rehearsed for a whole year ! If they did not rehearse they certainly conversed sufficiently about it, for I heard a new story every day. I wore, on that occasion, a magnificent Chinese Prince's marriage robe of coral-coloured watered silk, heavily embroidered with great golden dragons clambering in five-clawed imperial splendour all over my back. On my head a sort of papal tiara of Oriental pearls, in my hand a painted fan, and round my neck a string of emerald-jade beads. My feet were encased in black satin turn-up slippers and my stockings of white silk were scarcely visible, as the robe descended to my heels. I acquired this latter magnificence from my old friend, Sir Herbert Dering, now British Minister at Sofia, on his return from Peking. He was in command of the Embassy forces during the Boxer Rebellion, and no doubt it was due to his coolness of head and able disposition

of our tiny forces that we won through as well as we did. The first occasion on which I had worn this robe was at the painter's, Walter Crane's, where it completely eclipsed all other costumes at a fancy dress party, whereas it was merely a single gem in the splendour of the Embassy ball. I remember at the Crane's, where I found Harrington Mann, Charles Shannon, James Pryde, and a number of other delightful friends among the painters, the joke was to come up to me and say: "My dear Ainslie, I'm so glad to see you, but I wish you'd be kind enough to turn your back on me." They were buzzing like bees in admiration of my back—not very flattering to the other side, as I vainly explained.

The Rodds' fancy ball was fully described in the Italian, British and American Press at the time, and surely there has never been anything to equal it elsewhere. The greatest Italian families were practically all represented, and vied with one another in the splendour of the imaginative setting which they gave to the material gorgeousness of costumes and jewels. *Many*, not merely some of the women shone as though they were shrines, so covered and canopied were they with priceless heirlooms in diamond, pearl, ruby, emerald, opal and sapphire. I remember, rather late in the evening, offering an arm to an exquisite little Sicilian, whose head-dress seemed to be on fire with the blazing light of precious stones in tiara and coronet. Her first remark was: "My head is aching with rubies and diamonds. Give me some lemonade." A connoisseur in such matters told me that she had, on her head alone, far more than two millions of francs worth of jewels (about £50,000), and as her dress was also resplendent in the same manner the total must

have been something fabulous. *Yet the whole effect was perfect.* Good taste can ally itself with magnificence as well as with moderation, for both are *art*. I remember that there had to be a guard of police to protect the ladies of this famous ball when we went to the Argentina theatre to be photographed afterwards. But the crowds were quite harmless after all.

Both here and at the Princesse de Léon's one did not enter the ballroom in the ordinary way, but formed part of a group or *compagnie* as the Parisians called it. I shall always remember my own black and silver Henri II costume at the latter ball, with its trunk hose, which felt very cold as one was waiting in the hall for the carriage, in the early hours of the morning! I was then staying with my friend, Prince Alexis Orloff, in the Rue St. Dominique, who exercised his diplomatic privilege and went in the magnificent white uniform of the Imperial Guard. "Pouf," as he was called, seemed at first merely fat and good-natured, but in reality he had inherited plenty of intelligence from his father, the celebrated Russian Ambassador to Paris. He was one of the very few Russians of my acquaintance who had the intuition of the approaching avalanche in Russia, and removed the greater part of his very large fortune to France and I believe also to England, in 1913. "Pouf" had the greatest admiration for Englishmen, although he did not like London—he talked English with a cockney accent—or England. He was a regular sybarite and rarely left the charmed circle of the Rue St. Dominique or the Riviera, where he used always to take a large house and import an army of servants. He used to say that the English alone did not flatter or try to obtain favours. I used frequently to run over and stay a few

days with him while I was “reading for diplomacy”: it was like entering fairyland, so remote from London lodgings were those spacious rooms, heavy with scent burned on a brazier, and a white-statued fountain-tinkling garden opening out from the great red silk dining-room and library, with its reassuring rows of diplomatic histories and other decorous tomes, which I fear endured many frivolous conversations. For “Pouf” was very fond of the *Parisienne du monde*—he did not care for the *cabotines*—“*filles de concierge*,” he called them. He gave most amusing little luncheons and dinners, ending often in some wild prank. I remember being the only non-Russian at a luncheon-party, after which the ladies actually ducked a disagreeable old Princesse Galitzine in the lovely marble fountain in the garden, sparkling that afternoon in May in all its beauty. They disliked her for some reason I never could clearly make out. It was a question of total immersion carried out with great rapidity after much discussion in their own language which, alas, I understand so imperfectly, although my mother speaks it like a Russian. The Princesse was in and out before I could protest, and I must confess that I could not help laughing when she appeared wigless, dripping like a water-rat and spluttering with mud and rage. She was, however, none the worse for this post-prandial baptism—certainly not her tongue—but that would have been impossible.

The Galitzin family is very numerous in Russia, and as all the sons and daughters of a prince were respectively prince or princess, the story runs that on one occasion a princely member of the clan was stopped at a toll-gate and asked for ten kopecks. He felt his pockets and found that he had forgotten his purse.

He decided to oblige the toll-keeper to let him pass by letting fly the splendour of his patronymic. "I am the Prince Galitzin : I have forgotten my purse ; let me pass and I will pay you double when I return." "I've heard that story before," said the toll-keeper, "and as to your being Prince Galitzin, for that matter, so am I : but you must pay the money now all the same."

The Orloffs are descended from the famous lover of the Empress Catherine, celebrated by Byron. The *coup d'état* which placed her on the throne has been marvellously described by a former ambassador to St. Petersburg, Count Roederer. I possess a copy of this masterpiece in little—for the whole is contained in fifty moderate-sized pages of print. Some day I shall translate it. He gives an extraordinarily vivid picture of the Empress driving into St. Petersburg with her lover and her hairdresser seated opposite to her in the carriage, quite uncertain as to whether she was to be put to death immediately or to be received by the army with acclamation. The latter turned out to be the case. Roederer used to tell the story of his embassy in the eighteenth century *salons* of Paris after he had retired from diplomacy. It used to be the fashion for fair hostesses to beg him to do so. As he grew old, his friends begged him to write down the narrative, which we possess, as he used to tell it and as it came from his pen. The Russian Government did its best to obtain the suppression of this document by bringing pressure to bear upon the French Government, but fortunately for us the book was already in type and in a good many hands. It is little known in France and less with us.

To return for a moment to the Costume ball at Rome, I have said that we entered in companies there



and at the Princesse de Léon's. The entrances of the Comédie Française at the Princesse de Léon's, followed by the Comédie Italienne, were exceedingly brilliant, only partly owing to the costumes. The *acting* was for fully a half in the buoyantly joyous effect of the *ensemble*. Perhaps the Rodd's Ball was a little less hilarious than the Léon ball, but it was incomparably more magnificent, and the acting was beautiful there also owing to the large number of Italians present—and Italians simply do anything artistic naturally. "*Toute l'Italie blazonnée était là*," one might say in the words that Théophile Gautier applied to one of the books of Hugo's *Légende des Siècles*.

At this distance of time, names of individuals might be expected to fade, but they are all as vividly before the memory now as when I strode solemnly along, followed by my friends Count de la Feld, Carlo Placci and other temporary Chinese mandarins—pre-eminence went rather by robe than by rank—we grave and reverend Signors being attended by a bevy of the fairest among the maidens who danced decorously and lightly along in contrast to the measured tread of the mandarins. Immediately ahead of us was the Golden Folly of the Contessa Caserta, clad entirely in a robe of gold upon gold, embroidered and decorated all with loops and festoons of the precious metal. Her crown of gold relaxed its severity only to admit a few rubies and to permit her wealth of gilded curls to fall upon her golden shoulders. She held a golden orb in one hand, a sceptre in the other, and was followed by a train of lovers, whose bodies were covered entirely with gold leaf so that they shone with precious gold from head to gilded toe—their very loin cloths shone with crysoprase and other gems of

yellow light. With them travelled great hounds, also gilded and adorned with sun-kissed leashes, at which they strained when they entered the ballroom and scented the lions. These, with a few panthers and jaguars were quietly couched at the feet of little *Princesse Obolensky*—she had entered mounted upon one of them, though the story went that they had been heavily drugged the night before they left their cages.

Grouped in insolent splendour upon a divan reclined or lolled the Persian court entirely in harmonies of blue and green. Their turbans, their dresses were drenched with waves of light that came partly from their jewels, partly from the eyes which were the finest, not only in Rome, but in Italy, in Europe and in the New world. Round the neck of one of them—*Dorotea Radziwill*—shone the most celebrated of pearl necklaces, known as the Tears of Poland.

Before we took up our stations to complete the picture, we had to pass before the entire Pantheon of Olympus, gathered round the awful splendour of Juno, the Ambassadors, seated upon her throne and attended by Rainbows and Loves, marshalled beneath the sceptre of *Princesse Potenzianni* as *Venus the Queen*. In and out of the groups as they approached the central dais danced a weirdly, wonderful being, in wild beast skins, half human, half faun, light and agile as Ariel. Sometimes he sprang in the air as though touched with divine frenzy, at others he seemed to roll himself upon the earth as though the beast in him had triumphed. This inspiringly artistic personage was *Tyrwhit* of our Embassy, and his whimsicalities added just that touch of the impromptu to the motions of the different groups that must have been given by the fool in stately ducal processions of olden times.

The Ambassador looked Sir Walter Raleigh, every inch of him, in white silk and diamond-hilted rapier, his white silk cap, heavy with drooping pearls, and the jewels of the Garter displayed across his doublet of moiréd silk.

An unforgettable evening and morning this. It has made me incurious of all other costume balls past, present, and to come—the Indians say delightfully that when it is said of a man that he has eaten of “all vegetables” in the world, that does not mean he has eaten all the vegetables in the world, but merely that he has tasted of some of all the different kinds. That is certainly the case with the present writer, who feels he has been to all the parties that ever have been given in London, Paris or Rome and met all the interesting people ; although truthfully speaking, like all other mortals, he has merely been present at a very few of every sort. But the most wonderful of all parties is, after all, that afforded by the talk of an interesting man, when to speak, he lights “the ballroom in his brain” and sets his fancy or his memory dancing for one’s benefit.

## CHAPTER IX

### DIPLOMACY

Athens—Sir Edmund Monson—Lady Monson—Mrs. Ronalds—"Duchesses as Thick as Peas"—Maid of Athens Plain—Declaration of War Mislaïd—Lord Charles Beresford—Paderewski's Prophecy of the Great War—Prussians Low Born—Sir Clare Ford—Sir Donald Wallace—Olympia—Crown Prince of Greece.

THE privilege of the pen is that, like Sir Boyle Roche's bird, it can be in several places at the same time. Indeed, the last chapter has flitted about a good deal—from the desks of the excellent Scoones in Garrick Street to the ballrooms of Paris and Rome. Thus perhaps it may have been less tiresome than if I had kept the reader's nose to the grindstone as mine was kept in the early 'nineties, despite those varieties of experience with which I have attempted a little mural decoration.

Early in 1890, we heard that an examination might be held at any time. I had been a good deal in Germany during the previous year trying to acquire perfection in that tongue, which when Stendhal was asked if he knew, he replied that he had spent five years in *unlearning*. This necessity for expertism in German was due to Sir Augustus Paget's request, to which I have already referred, that more marks might be given for proficiency. This placed it on a level of French. Those in the batch that went up with me were the present Sir Horace Rumbold, our present Ambassador at Constantinople, the late Lord Terence Blackwood, my old friends "Tout" Beaumont, now

Sir Henry Beaumont, and Sir Herbert Dering. The examination took place in the middle of a very cold winter, and whether it was due to the draughty lodgings which I found in Bond Street on my sudden return from Delgaty, or to some other cause, I developed a very fine attack of bronchitis before it was more than half concluded, which necessitated my retiring to bed, and put me out of count on that occasion, which turned out to be the only one available for me, as I was soon after over twenty-five. Thus I found myself out of the direct line for the profession, and decided that it would be a pity to forgo the experience of, at any rate, a few years in the career as an honorary attaché, which would ensure for me exactly the same position as I should at first have occupied, had I been able to complete the examination and been successful.

I knew plenty of people, both at the Foreign Office and in diplomacy, and it was only a question where I should first go on this adventure. I had long been interested in Greece, ancient and modern, and as the Minister, Sir Edmund Monson, had been saying for some time previously that he would like an attaché at the Legation I decided, with Henry Foley, that I should go thither, stopping a short time with my first cousin, now Sir Evelyn Grant Duff, British Minister at Berne during the war, who was then Third Secretary at Rome. He gave me a very pleasant time, and I made the acquaintance of several interesting Italians, whom I afterwards met again during my many visits.

Modern Athens has so often been described that I shall certainly dip no brush in violet and ultramarine to paint its external beauties. The Hon. Sir Edmund Monson was a delightful Chief, who entertained the whole of his Staff to luncheon every day. He was a

capital raconteur, not nearly so lengthy in his verbal as in his written narratives, pausing only now and then to draw his fine long fingers through his grey beard. His eye was bright brown and vivid, and he never wore glasses even in the cruel glare of the Athenian mid-day, though he told me that he had begun to feel the effects. The beard seemed to grow longer and longer while I was at Athens, until it became positively patriarchal. Afterwards, when I dined with him in Paris, while he was Ambassador, I found that it had been removed at the suggestion of King Edward, who was rarely wrong in such matters. In the pulpit of a Sunday, Sir Edmund made a fine show. The beard was very much in its right place when he was discussing the ethics of Abraham in his relation to Isaac *filis* and John Stuart Mill. Sir Edmund is the only diplomatist I have known who loved to play the parson, though all diplomatists have to do so to the extent of marrying British subjects who make properly attested application. His career was rather exceptional, for he obtained his nomination and appointment to a diplomatic post, which he resigned with a view to standing for the City of Oxford. Oxford failing to elect him to Parliament, he decided to enter the Consular service, and obtained a post somewhere in Austria-Hungary, where he had acrimonious epistolary correspondence with the F. O. on the subject of his communicating direct with the Office or through the Embassy at Vienna. The latter was the rule for the rest of the Consular service, but Sir Edmund maintained that he was a privileged person, owing to his previous diplomatic career. He was eventually transferred to a South American Consular post. There he met and married a beautiful Miss Munro, and soon after began agitating to return

to the diplomatic service. His brother, Lord Oxenbridge, and powerful friends at the F. O. eventually did the job for him, and at the period I have mentioned he was on his rapid way upward in the career, with the plums of the profession, Brussels and Paris, about to drop into his mouth.

As to Lady Monson one felt that she came far nearer the Tanagra type in flesh and blood than any of the statuettes in the Museum. She was a truly beautiful little person, devoted to her family of lusty boy babies. The story used to run that in later days, as Ambassadress entertaining an Austrian Archduchess at tea, she had been known to remark suddenly : "I can hear Tommy crying in the nursery and so please excuse me for a moment." The Archduchess patiently waited five minutes, ten minutes, until she finally realized that she had been completely forgotten in favour of Tommy. She went away disconsolate, a wiser and perhaps a better Archduchess.

The most brilliant woman in London, whose only defect in conversation is that, as a rule, she is inaudible, once remarked to me that she proposed starting a society for bringing "a little darkness and discomfort into the lives of the very rich." The events of the last seven years have certainly done this for all Archduchesses.

As the narrative is for a moment moving among the former great ones of the earth, I may here insert a little *mot* said to have been uttered at my old friend, Mrs. Ronald's in Eaton Place ever-thronged reception of a Sunday afternoon during the height of the London season. The two small drawing-rooms were crowded with people, so was the staircase, so was every nook and cranny, so that the musicians were hardly able to strike the notes of the piano or to move their violin

bows without colliding with a hat or flattening out somebody's aristocratic nose. Two ladies are supposed to arrive at this juncture, one an *habituée* of the house and friend of the hostess, the other a newcomer. By dint of vigorous pushing and merciless treading upon toes they had reached the top of the staircase, whence it was just possible to view the occupants of the inner room by standing on tiptoe. The leader had even seen and nodded to her hostess, who had welcomed her across a dozen heads. The newcomer did not respond to a slight motion of the hand urging her to advance so as to be introduced to Mrs. Ronalds. She remained gazing into the inner room with a petrified stare. Her friend whispered to her: "What are you staring at? Why don't you come on?" "Look, look!" replied the other, pointing and continuing to stare: "Duchesses as thick as peas!"

I don't know whether others will be as amused by this anecdote as I was when it was first told to me by a delightful and brilliant American friend, now herself a (sweet) British pea as above, who used to say, when asked casually what she was going to do some afternoon in Rome, would reply: "Oh, I don't know: a little shopping and afterwards a little snobbing till tea-time."

Thackeray makes great use of the "little word snob," though he does not give its true derivation which was first pointed out to me at the club by that most pleasant Prince, Francis of Teck—I suppose I must myself have been "snobbing" on that occasion. The derivation is, of course, from the Italian *nobile* with the privative *s* added as an affix. The word is formed quite regularly like many other Italian words, such as *snaturare*, meaning to alter the nature of;



*snebbiare*, to clear away the clouds ; *snodare*, to untie knots ; *snevare*, to enervate.

Before Thackeray, the word was correctly applied to the whole population not of the same social class as those able to "ruffle it" at Ranelagh or Cremorne. With the advent of our democracy, an immense stimulus was given to the activity of the new snobs, largely recruited from the Liberal Party, which cursed the privileges of the Upper House, while secretly ready to sell its soul in order to obtain entrance thereto. In Austria-Hungary, with its feudal traditions, the barriers between the social classes in pre-war days were far more rigid, and as it was put to me by a French diplomatist, there were just three degrees in Viennese society ; the old feudal families like Kleinmichel, Trautsmansdorff, Esterhazy, and a small number of others ; then a far larger and excellent society of secondary rank, which was equivalent to our Mayfair and Belgravia, and finally, a far larger one comprising the State employees below the highest rank, who were always on the look-out for a diplomatist whom they might boast of obtaining to dine with them. *Bonnes fortunes* were very easily achieved in this latter set, owing to the immense importance attached to the diplomatic uniform.

In Paris, the fine flower of snobbishness has, I think, blossomed only to a slight extent, and there is always a distinction between the French and English varieties. I have often heard an excellent Parisian remark to another : "*il est très snob : il va beaucoup dans le monde*," where there is no intention to depreciate, and where, indeed, the notion is rather to extol the worldly wisdom of the individual in question. M. Paul Bourget, the novelist and academician, is well known for his

adoration of the *noble Faubourg*, and I have known him, on more than one occasion, interrupt a literary conversation in order to exchange platitudes with some anodyne Comtesse. This, of course, would not chime with the communistic views of M. Anatole France, who, as he says, does not frequent the Academy as he does not find it possible to sit within several places of Monsieur Bourget and breathe the particular atmosphere in which revels the author of *Mensonges*. France is, however, in my opinion an aristocrat himself in all his ways, from his crimson Cardinal's cap to his taste in poetry and letters. One can well understand his distaste for the bended knee of Bourget.

To the Legation at Athens, in Sir Edmund Monson's day, came all sorts of notabilities, strange types like old Prince Cantacuzène, the Russian Military Attaché, who asked leave always to wear uniform as he had passed so many years of his life buttoned up to the chin that he felt quite uncomfortable in civilian dress. Tricoupis was Prime Minister during part of the time that I was at Athens, and I had a good many chats with him. He knew London and the St. James's Club well, wherein I sympathised with him, but did not share his admiration for Mr. Gladstone. He was a native of Missolonghi, where Byron died, and I remember asking if the poet's memory was preserved there. "Most certainly it is," he replied. "There is a statue to him, and I knew his old boatman who obtained a post there when it was known that he had been the poet's boatman. I also knew the lady who inspired the poem: 'Maid of Athens ere we part'; she was old and ugly when I knew her, and I cannot see that she can ever have been beautiful or interesting; there was nothing in her." He spoke quite good English, save

that like his sister, whose parties I used to attend in the *Odos Akademias*, he was apt to drop his aspirates. He told me that he wore the same rather thick clothes all the year round, and I myself found, during the furnace weather, that one got through the day better in rather thick clothes, which kept out some of the sun's rays, while in thin clothes one was simply grilled to a turn. He said that he was always too busy to feel the heat, but added that it was necessary to stay at home during the hot part of the day, "and then the evenings are so lovely." I must say that, to my northern blood, the difference between day-time and night-time was that between the furnace in full blast and the furnace with rather less coal on. We used to go down to the seashore at Phalerum late at night by train to try and get a breath of fresh air from the sea. Returning to Athens was re-entering the oven. One began melting in bed at about 6 a.m., when the sun rose, and this process continued until one was again on the beach at Phalerum at midnight. I am told Madrid is as hot as Athens in summer ; also the Persian Gulf. But I am sceptical as to this. I will admit it of one other place only, and even then Athens at 3 p.m., when the sun has been at work all day, would in my opinion win.

The old Prince Cantacuzène used to tell me stories of his early days in the diplomatic career. To put it mildly, he did not greatly esteem either the Serbs or the Bulgarians, and gave this account of the preliminaries to war between those countries. He was *en poste* at Sofia. The Serbs had withdrawn their *Chargé d'Affaires* and left Rhangabé, the Greek Minister, in charge of their interests. As the Serbs had no cipher, all their telegrams were read by the

Bulgarian officials, and copies sent to their War Office. At 11 p.m. one night arrived the Serbian declaration of war in the shape of a telegram addressed to Rhangabé. Madame Rhangabé was suffering at the time from *angina pectoris*, and her husband engaged in nursing her. He ordered the servant to leave the telegram in an ante-room while he attended to his wife in her critical condition, and finally retired to bed exhausted at an early hour of the morning, entirely forgetful of the telegram. At about midnight had taken place a Bulgarian Council of War. The councillors sat solemnly round the table awaiting the declaration of war, which they knew had arrived, to be handed to them by the Greek Minister. None came. At about 9 a.m. a visit was paid to Rhangabé, and he was asked if he had heard anything from Serbia. "No, I have no news whatever," he replied, sitting up in bed and rubbing his eyes.

The mislaying of this telegram reminds me of an amusing incident that occurred during the Firman question, when ten telegrams arrived for Lord Salisbury, who was at Beaulieu, from Cairo and Constantinople. The Secretary of State had brought a cipher with him, but unfortunately it proved to be the wrong one. He merely sent a telegram to the Foreign Office to enquire whether they contained anything of importance. I love this story, which shows what a big man Lord Salisbury was—he was far too sure, both of himself and of Great Britain to allow such a trifle as ten cipher telegrams from the East to disturb him. Like many other great men he was careless of dress, and the old story that he was refused admission on that account to the rooms at Monte Carlo may be perfectly true. I have always liked the explanation for his bad clothes

given by one of our Dukes : " You see, when I'm in the country everybody knows who I am, so clothes don't matter, and when I'm walking about in the streets of London *nobody* knows who I am, so it don't matter there either." But best of all I like Anatole France's reason for wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honour : " Because it saves the expense of benzine—people are sure one's coat is tidy when they see the ribbon."

Among other frequenters of the Legation while I was on the Staff was Lord Charles Beresford, then in command of the Fleet anchored at the Piræus. Of all genial Irishmen that I have met, Lord Charles was the most genial. His geniality amounted to genius. I believe he could have elicited a laugh and an affirmative smile out of the Sphinx or Abdul Hamid or a Chancellor on Budget day. His cabin on board the flag-ship, where he more than once hospitably entertained me, was a joy to behold—a regular garden of the wondrous flowers that rush into existence during the brief and radiant Hellenic spring, the most comfortable of chairs, cheroots galore, and anything that can be wanted at a West End club could be obtained by merely uttering the word in this enchanted corner of the Dreadnought. The keynote of the Admiral's cabin was photographs, in silver and crimson and blue leather frames : beautiful ladies everywhere, signed with every token of esteem and admiration. A galaxy of them gazed at one from every table and from the walls. Mere men, and even brother admirals, appeared to be at a discount, though no doubt there was a locker full of them somewhere. Lord Charles was breezy and outspoken, and I remember on one occasion, at a later date, when he was good enough

to favour the present writer and others with his views as to Lord Fisher's policy at the Admiralty when the latter was First Lord. He dotted all the i's—in scarlet—and ended on a splendid top note amid general and hilarious assent. Unfortunately we had none of us noticed a figure in a corner of the room engrossed upon the *Saturday Review*: he sat perfectly still, and apparently unmoved until the tirade was over—and then the First Lord stalked out of the room still maintaining perfect silence.

To me it was like a tonic of fresh sea breezes to meet Lord Charles in London. Our ways did not often coincide, I am sorry to say, but when they did happen to do so I always enjoyed myself immensely, and I hope that I did not produce an opposite impression upon the Admiral.

One of the last occasions on which we met was at dinner at Lord and Lady Stuart of Wortley's in Cheyne Walk. Lord Wortley was then in the House of Commons, and sat for one of the divisions of Manchester. The guest of the evening was Paderewski, who came with his wife, and there were also the Duchess of Atholl and one or two others. I remember taking in Madame Paderewski and being asked to entertain her with French conversation, which I did to the best of my ability, while gleaning a few remarks let fall by others in my native tongue. The interesting moment occurred, however, after the meal, when the ladies had left the room and Lord Wortley, Lord Charles (then an M.P.), Paderewski and the present writer were seated together, a *partie carrée*—at least I do not remember another man. Paderewski at once began talking: he said—and this was in 1911—"I am delighted to meet you Lord Charles, and I may say that I particularly asked

Mr. Stuart Wortley to invite me to meet you so that I might warn one of England's greatest seamen of the danger that threatens. I am not talking of what I think *may* be the case, I am telling you of what *will* happen. Germany is preparing to attack you. How she will do so I cannot say exactly, but she will attack you either at the same time as she attacks France or separately. She would like, of course, to do it separately, because she can easily wring the neck of the Gallic cock when she had done with you. Her shipbuilding is entirely directed against you." He then went into a number of rather technical details, which were interesting at the time, but I do not clearly recall them. Then he turned rather towards me and went on to say : " Perhaps you are wondering why I, who am a Pole, come and talk like this to a British Admiral. It is just because I belong to a down-trodden country, Poland, that I am speaking like this to-night. I have lived for years at Berlin and watched them at work, and also in Poland, and from across the Polish frontier. I love England because she is a free country with a chance for every man who will work. Prussia would like to enslave the whole world—and I *know* she will succeed unless England is able to stop her. So I warn you—tell your Admiralty what I have said, because it is the *truth* told by a friend." Although I made no note of it at the time, I can guarantee the accuracy of my memory for this prophetic warning. Paderewski went on to talk of the British Government and its achievements during the nineteenth century. His knowledge of our home politics, of the dates and sequences of ministers over many years in the nineteenth and back into the eighteenth century was surprising. The three listeners agreed more than once that he had the advantage of

them as to matters concerning which two out of the three were supposed to be specialists.

Paderewski did not touch the piano that evening, and I fear it is true that we shall never again hear his magical renderings of Chopin—the greatest musician-poet of modern times. Even Beethoven and Mozart only rarely approach that intimately lyrical and *poetical* atmosphere in which Chopin *lives*. He creates his environment *at once*—in a few notes one is wafted thither—while others labour for pages and often fail to reach such a creation at all.

The last time that I saw the future Prime Minister of Poland was in 1915, when I called at Claridge's and asked for him. On sending up my card I was admitted, and found the great artist-statesman in his sitting-room on the side overlooking Berkeley Square. He was quite alone. The room was not large ; the table littered with cards, letters, telegrams and directories of various sorts and of various countries. Paderewski greeted me hospitably and warmly as is his wont, and we rapidly discussed the matter, directly connected with the war, on which I had called. I then mentioned the wonderful evening at Lord Wortley's, at which I have hinted above, and found that, of course, he recalled it perfectly. "My warning has proved true," he said. "The Prussians and their slaves, the rest of Germany and Austria, are *there* and *there*—he drew me to the map flagged with pointer pins—they will get *there* and *there*," he went on, pointing to various places. "But you will beat them at a terrible cost and to the ruin of many of your allies. When you *have* beaten them you must never believe that the Prussians will become civilized—they are not Germans ; they are a race apart. You must occupy, with your fleet, *permanently* this



island—he pointed, I think, to Rügen, just off the coast of Northern Germany, so that you can at once cut off their supplies when they begin again to play foul.” He spoke with great vehemence and conviction, and I was deeply impressed with what he said, which recalled the words of Napoleon, to the effect that Prussians are not born like ordinary mortals, but are bred from exploding shells. A shell bursts and out steps a Prussian—a modern version of the story of the dragon’s teeth.

Among my colleagues at Athens was Sir Francis Elliot, afterwards a Minister Plenipotentiary. His wife is a daughter of that delightful person, the late Sir Clare Ford, Ambassador at Madrid, and afterwards at Rome, where I had occasionally the honour of dining with him. His late son, Johnny Ford, was one of my boon companions at Scoones’s, and eventually found his way into the career, guided by the expert hand of Eric Barrington. They have altered the examination now, and I daresay for the better. Apparently they now have a board consisting of an ex-diplomatist, an ex-politician, and a Labour member, besides other strange odd fish supposed to cover the whole orbit of political interests and to ensure that no old-time cajoleries prevail. To me there is something rather comic in a rather jaded ex-ambassador conferring with Hobnails as to whether Mr. Vere de Vere Beauclerc is a fitting person to receive a nomination or whether Mr. H. Hobnails of the Broken Potteries is the more worthy. I suppose they compromise in this little matter as the Prime Minister does in great ones, and let their knowledge or ignorance of cube root settle the matter by nominating both for one vacancy, also open to the competition of ten other candidates. It does seem absurd that after

so many attempts we should none of us have been able to evolve a system which shall secure the best man for the post—written examination papers reflect only one facet of any personality. Certainly *viva voce* is very important, and that was altogether ignored by the wisecracks of my day, headed by the well-intentioned but wholly inadequate Eric Barrington. But to return to our muttons—or rather to the frolics of former lambs.

Johnny Ford told me that his father, Sir Clare, began life as a cornet of dragoons, and suddenly sold out upon being refused an allowance of £3,000 a year by his father. To obviate his becoming totally Bohemian, whither his tastes seemed to point, he was nominated attaché in Paris through the intermediacy of Lord Malmesbury, and made good in the career. Johnny is, alas, no longer living, but his brother, Captain Richard Ford, is, I am glad to say, alive and married to a charming and beautiful lady. He will not, I am sure, object to my concluding this brief mention of his father with the delightful apostrophe with which he concluded, at Rome, an argument with Johnny on the well-worn topic of allowance from father to son: "Well, my dear boy, I suppose you must have it, but let me tell you this: boys are very well when they are quite young and looked after by their tutor or schoolmaster, but when they grow up they become simply acquaintances with a claim upon one." Johnny quite played up to this amiable outburst of his father's by saying: "I'm immensely obliged to you, my dear father, and may I say that as a mere acquaintance I hope you will keep me on your dinner lists at the Embassy, because you certainly give the best dinners in Rome." Johnny Ford had very good taste in art, and was what might be described as a bold collector. He once produced from his

pocket in my presence at Athens a large piece of carved white marble. I asked what it was, and he replied that he had found it on the Acropolis and proposed taking it back to England with him. There was and I suppose still is a law as in Italy against removing works of art, but how Johnny Ford got that heavy block into his pocket, and managed to go about with it, has always been a mystery to me. That other friend of mine was subtler who crossed the Italian frontier with a bundle of golf clubs wrapped in what looked like tattered tarpaulin, but was really a masterpiece by Benozzo Gozzoli.

Carlo Baroli, the Italian Secretary of Legation, lover of London and eternal consumer of Virginia cigars, and Benavides, the Spanish Secretary, shared with me a house near the Athenian Legation. Most of the *corps diplomatique* used to dine at the Hôtel Grande Bretagne, where we were comfortable and sociable. Our table was often enlarged to receive such visitors as Sir Donald Wallace, who had come out for the Government to study Greek finance. His book on Russia is now, of course, rather out of date, but includes a good many shrewd observations. Sir Donald was indebted for his start in life to my grandfather, Mr. Morgan, who received him into his house at St. Petersburg and did everything for him. He had no charm of manner and no flowers of speech ; he was a "close" man, a born courtier, and in favour with King Edward. My uncle, on my father's side, Grant Duff the diarist, of whom more anon, used to say that his information was always first-rate and most reliable. Sir Donald was just that, a canny Scot, who never gave a bawbee away without seeing the glint of a saxepe in exchange. It is strange that he should have been an *habitué* of

York House, Twickenham, where I went so much, and also of my maternal grandfather's house in St. Petersburg in former days. They used to say of him, jokingly, that he really was his own father, for I believe his origin was obscure.

During the summer at Athens, Carlo Baroli and I decided that we would visit Olympia to see the famous yellow-flecked marble Hermes of Pruxiteles, which still rises, youthful, upon its pedestal amid the waste and desolation of the ages. The heat was torrid, and the red velvet-cushioned carriages completed the sensation of being in a fiery furnace. We had several long hours of this before we jolted into the wooden shed which served as a railway-station. Above us, on a little elevation, dominated on either side by low wooded hills, stood the museum with its treasure. From the slope opposite emerged this masterpiece of the ages after a sleep of centuries.

The heat of Athens was stultifying. I used to try everything to escape from it, even adopting the reckless remedy of galloping out towards Kephissia on a beautiful black horse that I had bought soon after my arrival. I used frequently to meet the celebrated King Tino bound on a similar quest. King Tino used to be an *habitué* of London and frequented the society of many of my friends when he could escape from his dusty glaring metropolis. The Crown Prince used also to be a good deal in evidence at Athens during the winter. Sir Edwin Egerton succeeded Sir Edmund as Minister. He used to stride along stickless for his daily constitutional, waving his arms like windmills. Of course, he soon became a familiar figure in a small place like Athens, and people would stop him on the verge of these pedestrian activities in order to be seen

conversing with his Britannic Majesty's Minister. This used rather to bore Egerton, who was anxious to get his legs going, and he at last got into the way of saying: "Glad to see you, glad to see you: hope you'll come and dine at the Legation—must be getting on now—" thus he would shake off the undesired companion and continue his perambulations. Egerton had a memory for names and faces equalled only by that of the Secretary of State himself, to whom I have already referred in this connection. Frequently he would trot back to the Legation and remark to his wife that he had met so and so on his walk, naming—say the French Military Attaché—and had asked him to lunch the following day. One thing certain was that the French Military Attaché would not be lunching at the British Legation on that day; it might be anybody, but it certainly would not be he—most probably the Russian Naval Attaché would turn up, and then it would be considered that His Excellency had made quite a good shot at the identity of his guest—France and Russia were allies then: the protocol was safe! One chilly winter's evening he came cheerfully back (it can also be cold in Greece) and warming his hands before the crackling logs said to his wife: "I've asked a young man I'm sure we've met somewhere to dine to-morrow. I can't for the life of me remember his name—I rather think he's a British subject. When I invited him in order to get on with my walk he asked if he were to bring his wife, and what could I say but—of course bring your wife? I told him to come in a dinner jacket, and warned him that we dined at eight-fifteen sharp and never waited for anyone. He gave a pleasant little laugh and accepted."

"I wonder whom he has asked this time," said Lady Egerton to her companion. "I suppose from what we've been told he can't be an Englishman."

The mystery was solved precisely at eight-fifteen the following evening when the drawing-room door of the Legation was opened by the English butler with a look of well-restrained surprise on his countenance as he announced: "Their Royal Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess of Greece."

I had a rather entertaining experience at the house of one of the Russian Secretaries, whose wife had a good deal of the *charme slav*, which vanished with Bolshevism. We one day had an argument as to whether Russian or English possessed the most powerful expletives in a literary form. I, of course, upheld the supremacy of Anglo-Saxon, while the lady in question, who became afterwards an ambassadress, was equally determined that it was Russian. So we made a bet of one thousand cigarettes to a picnic, to be given by the lady if she lost. We had the Austrian First Secretary as impartial judge of the contest. No length was set to the imprecations, which might be as long or as short as the reciter chose. The lady was allowed to begin. She made a splendid start with flashing eyes and an accent of concentrated rage, producing a flush which was highly becoming. The selection, flung directly at me, was from a poem by Poushkin addressed to some one of Jewish extraction. So far as I could follow it was a flamboyantly splendid piece of rhetoric and took quite three minutes to repeat.

I waited until the fair speaker had subsided amid general applause, and then looking our umpire full in the eyes, hurled at him the following single line from

Shakespeare at the top of my voice, which is fairly powerful :

“The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon !”

He wilted—and I won.

## CHAPTER X

### VENICE AND LONDON

Venice—Catulle Mendès—Duke of Brontë—Countess Hoyos and a Byronic Anecdote—Marquis of Huntly—Prince Bismarck—At Homburg—The Empress Frederick—German Society—Sir William Harcourt—The Duke of Devonshire—Kaid Maclean—Herbert Spencer.

I WENT on leave about the beginning of July, and met in Venice my good friend Alexander Dalhousie Ramsay, who had relations there—Bentivoglio d'Aragona and his charming wife, the Marchesa Idita. The beauty of Venice at that time was the Comtessa Morosini, who had round her a regular court of young Italian officers and aristocrats. My Italian was then rather to seek, but as the lady was of French extraction, I managed to make myself understood to the extent of being invited to spend a few days at Treviso, where the Morosini had a villa. It was a wonderful visit indeed, everything blazing, from the sun to the mortals beneath it, all fully vocal in admiration of our hostess. One detail amused me greatly at the time; when the heat grew rather less towards evening the Morosini would order her little pony-cart—just room for the driver and one more. She went for six little drives of about six minutes duration with each of us young men in turn. As she explained to me, it was the only way to avoid trouble with such inflammable material. Personally I fell in love with the daughter of the house, Morosina Morosini, aged nine—the name alone was



enough. Alexander Ramsay was the gayest of the gay, and we got on excellently well with Presbitero, Celleri and others whose names are less vivid as I write. I was taken to see the Da Vinci picture, which hung at the Monte di Pietá, where it had been pledged many years before and never claimed. I don't think I ever enjoyed bathing (save at Cuckoo Weir in Eton days) so much as during my visit to Venice. Ramsay and I would go out to the Lido at about eight o'clock, when it was delightfully cool, and the beach was quite free of other bathers. We would swim far out together into the silent lagoon, the tepid water yielding to us and enfolding us in an amorous embrace. Returning, we dressed and dined at the restaurant at about nine o'clock. We met plenty of friends, and kept up our laughter and chatter almost till morning. I had lovely rooms in the Casa San Samuele, and there wrote my poem, *The Death of Aretino*, on Titian, Palma Vecchio, Aretino and Veronica Franco, that Venetian Aspasia. The little volume that contained this and other youthful poems, *Escarlamonde*, was published in 1891, but has long been out of print. I hit upon the title "Escarlamonde" many years before the appearance of Massenet's opera of the same name. It appears in the poems of the early troubadours, and must have been a well-known woman's name in the South of France in the thirteenth century.

During my visit to Venice I met Catulle Mendès, who was an *habitué* and himself a brilliant raconteur. He said that he had recently met Wilde in Paris, who was deeply engaged in evolving the *idée psychologique*, which was to form the backbone of his next play. Wilde had praised Ibsen, especially *Hedda Gabler*, though he said that he followed the reverse method, striv-

ing to make the dialogue as brilliant as possible, whereas Ibsen rejects any phrase beyond the scope of individuals in ordinary life. He enjoyed the sensation of *multiplied personality*, obtainable only in the wings of a theatre where his work was being played, by hearing the tears or applause that greet any particular line. He preferred, for that reason, the Dramatic to the Analytic, where the author is for ever ignorant of his true admirers. "Wilde had further remarked," said Mendès, as we sat together in the low-ceilinged Vaporì restaurant inhaling cigarette smoke and indolently watching the opaline rings it made, "that paradoxes, though only half truths, were the best we could get, as there were no absolute truths." Mendès had then said: "There should be a paradoxist to act as your balance on the moral side;" to which Wilde replied: "Yes, but Christ was the only one there has ever been; our familiarity with the New Testament blinds us to the enormity of its paradoxes. What could be more enormous than 'Blessed are the Poor.'"

With such adventures as these, and others yet more ephemeral in the society of my friend Ramsay, the pleasant weeks of my Venetian visit ebbed away. He was the first to leave, however, and I went to see him off at his aunt's house, where the servants all insisted on kissing his hand. I don't remember seeing this done again in Italy, though my father tells me that when he was at Vienna long ago, the keepers always kissed the hands of the master and his guests before beginning the day's sport. When I was staying at Maniaci, in Sicily, with my friend the Hon. Alec. Hood, Duke of Brontë, the natives of the place always kissed his hand, which he extended for the purpose. I am for falling in with old customs like this, new

(and greatly inferior) substitutes come along fast enough. The habit is recorded in the Austrian phrase, "Kuss die Hard," which frequently takes the place of the act.

Among the Anglo-Austrians that I met in the early 'nineties and made friends with was Countess Hoyos, whose daughter married Count Herbert Bismarck. I remember meeting at luncheon with her the wife of the Chancellor, Princess Bismarck, a grim old lady, who spoke remarkably good English. She was a reader of *Truth*, and anxious to hear about Henry Labouchere, whom I had met once or twice. She described him as a mocking bird, but said she read every word he wrote, imagining, like many others, that the first personal pronoun of *Truth* covered the identity of the founder and proprietor, whereas, of course, he only contributed a small part of the paper, save in the very early days of its publication.

Countess Hoyos told me that she had been acquainted many years before, with an old lady, a Mrs. Barry, widow of a Genoese banker living at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This lady had been intimate with Byron. Upon leaving Italy for Greece, never to return, the poet made a will, whereby all the effects in his Italian house were to go to the Barry's in case he did not come back. Some time after his death this house became their property, and upon opening one of the drawers of a secretaire, she found *all the red hair of the Countess Guiccioli*, which she had cut off and given to Byron upon his leaving her, together with her miniature, which was lying upon the top of the hair. Byron had not found room for all this in his baggage.

At the end of this book will be found the pedigree of the Duffs and Gordons, showing the present writer's family

connection with Byron and with the Fife family and the literary instincts of the Duffs. It was presented to him by his good friend, Mr. J. M. Bulloch, editor of the *Graphic*, and was drawn up to illustrate the literary ability which entered the house of Gordon with the Duff marriage, early in the seventeenth century. Duff of Keithmore was the common ancestor. Prior to this marriage the gey (awful) Gordons were apparently devoid of literary gifts, though active enough in other respects, for Mr. Bulloch has assured the author that not one of them died in his bed for many generations—and what Mr. Bulloch, historian of the Gordons, does not know of that family may be safely held to be apocryphal. There is one curious anecdote of Huntly, head of the house, being ordered to meet the King of Scotland at Perth. His kinsman, Gordon of Gicht (see pedigree), had recently killed an enemy of his in Aberdeen, and was consequently held guilty of manslaughter. He had taken refuge with Huntly at Strathbogie, and while with his cousin was perfectly safe. Huntly replied to the King that he would only come to Perth on condition of Gordon's receiving a free pardon. This the King refused, and Huntly in his turn refused to go south to Perth, and the King was not strong enough to force him. No wonder that Huntly was known as the Cock of the North.

A curious proof of the magic of a name came under my personal observation at Aberdeen at the end of last century, when the candidature for the Lord Rectorship of Aberdeen University took place. Two excellent and estimable individuals presented themselves in full confidence that they would meet with no competitor worthy their steel. No more they would; and to one of them the Lord Provostship would certainly have



DELGATY CASTLE.

There be six great Barons of the North,  
Findlater, Fyfe and Filorth,  
And would ye ken the other three,  
Pishigo, Drum and Delgaty.

*Ancient Rhyme (modernized spelling).*



fallen, had not Huntly suddenly taken it into his head that he would like to be Lord Rector. The point of the anecdote will be lost if the reader does not supply imaginative local colour to enhance my description of Huntly as not only non-academical but very much the reverse ! Well, the hard-headed Aberdonians (Aberdeen is the city where Jews find it impossible to get a living) immediately elected Huntly. I must say I like them for it, and hope they will not mind my giving this instance of their susceptibility. I am quite sure that the Duke of Richmond *as a name* does not stir the Aberdonian breast one whit.

Homburg in the 'nineties was a favourite haunt of jaded London society, headed by the Prince of Wales, whose villa was looked upon as a kind of Mecca by some. He was a regular frequenter of the springs in the morning before breakfast, and the promenade under the lime-trees was full of beautiful people. The Ambassador to Germany was at that time Sir Edward Malet, whom I had dined with in Berlin, and always found very pleasant. He married Lady Ermyatrude Russell, sister of the Duke of Bedford. They had a wonderful dinner service of gold plate among other wonderful luxuries, and the Emperor William was a frequent—if not a too frequent—visitor. Sir Edward used to tell me of his interviews with Bismarck, that the Chancellor always produced yellow Rhine wine of exceedingly fine quality, and expected his interlocutor to drink glass for glass of it with himself. Therein he showed his craft, for few men must have had better heads than he, up to a certain date at any rate, when, I believe, he stopped heavy drinking, with the remark that each man was destined by God to drink so many thousands of bottles—and no more !

The Ambassador frequented Homburg during the month of August, when the Prince was there, and I frequently dined with him, and met most of the interesting people who came out from England. There were also some Americans, headed by the admirable speaker and anecdotist, Chauncey Depew, who used to find great favour with the ladies. They liked the anecdotes and the relish given to them by the old man. I remember his once asking a very pretty young friend of mine to tell him a funny tale in return for one of his. She replied: "You saw Mamma with a new crimson parasol to-day, didn't you? Well, I gave it her yesterday as a birthday present. We're both so pleased, Mamma because she's got a new parasol, and I because I can always see her coming in time now!"

Sir Edward Malet used to say that a good ambassador's career should resemble the career of a good woman—neither should be talked about, and certainly, I think, he realized that ideal at Berlin, where he was liked by all, including even the Emperor. He carried his discretion to the point of concealing the fact that he was very fond of a game of skittles, or *Kugel Spiel*, as the Germans call it—one rolls a wooden ball down a passage and tries to knock over as many wooden pins as possible. I was often invited to join a game of this sort, in which various august personages took part. At his request I never mentioned where I was going that afternoon.

The late Emperor and Empress Frederick were great friends of my uncle, Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, my father's elder brother. When William succeeded to the throne, my uncle was offered the Embassy at Berlin, but it turned out that with Kaiser William he



was not a *persona grata*, solely owing to this friendship with his father and mother, so he did not proceed. Owing to this friendship I was occasionally asked to dine by the widowed Empress at the Schloss, near Homburg. She was exceedingly kind and amiable, and on the whole, the most interesting woman talker, with one exception, that I have ever met. She always swept away ceremony and spoke in English, quite regardless of the Germans all round us during or after a meal. I remember her saying cheerfully: "We do these things much better in England, don't we, Mr. Ainslie? These Germans will never come up to us." I felt rather shy of assenting, but did so, and afterwards admired her for being so outspoken. Of course the Germans did not like it, but they were mostly a very conceited lot of people, as we afterwards had excellent reason to know, and some snubbing did them no harm.

The Empress had what I call a *rich* conversation. She was *vividly* interested in literature, and also in all the arts and natural sciences such as ornithology (a hobby of mine, as I have said), botany, chemistry, geology, etc., and would pour forth a flood of statements, based upon her reading or upon what she had been told or seen. Fortunately I was able to keep my side of the conversation going, and thus spent delightful hours in her company. But I remember old General Du Plat, who had been in her service, deeply deploring the Empress's thirst for knowledge, which kept him on his hind legs for so long at a stretch, while she had the cabinets and cases of museums opened and discussed their contents with the curators. Count Seckendorff was generally in attendance when I went to the Schloss, and I hear Germans often declare that

the Empress married him, but do not profess to know the truth of the matter.

I might have frequented German society much more than I did, both there and in Berlin, but there has always been for me something gross and unsympathetic in the general tone of Germans. Of course there are exceptions, such as Novalis, but he is not of our time, and Goethe stands apart with the very few greatest European writers. Stendhal said that he had spent three years in unlearning the language, but I have spent twenty-five without succeeding in doing so. I spoke it and read it fluently when I was twenty-five, and when I was forty read the complete works of Nietzsche in the original in Hauptmann and Campe's edition. It is curious how nearly all great German writers despise and dislike their own country. Heine is a proverbial instance, and Nietzsche is not any less contemptuous. The hairy heel of the barbarian protrudes at the oddest moments. Witness the following little anecdote, which illustrates the point, and was told me by my friend, Captain Patrick de Bathe. When he was Secretary to the Ambassador, Sir Frank Lascelles, at Berlin, the Ambassador announced one day that a party must be given to the big-wigs of Berlin—Admiralty, War Office, etc. The question was, what sort of party should it be? Pat, with that promptitude and surety of social touch that characterizes him, said, "I suggest sir, a stand-up buffet, with lots of champagne, beer, *pâtés de foie gras*, lobster salads, chickens, etc. It will save the trouble of talking to them, because they will be fully engaged with the victuals." The latter argument was cogent, and the date was fixed. All official Berlin crowded the Embassy (I forget if the most highest were present or no), and made a bee line for

the refreshments, as Pat had predicted. They made short work of a whole poultry-yard of chickens *nature* and in salad and a holocaust of the other comestibles, washing them down with champagne or beer—often taken alternately. The Staff of the Embassy was busily employed in seeing that fresh relays of food were brought up in time to meet the situation. The evening wore on most successfully, and still Berlin continued to guzzle. Pat grew weary of watching the disappearance trick applied to innumerable *pâtés*, when his attention was attracted by the peculiar behaviour of General Prince von —, who was endeavouring to force a large parcel of something into the tail-coat pocket of his gorgeous gold-laced uniform. On approaching the General, Pat observed the claw of a lobster protruding from a copy of the *Berliner Tageszeitung*, and preventing the entrance of the rest of the mollusc. Quick as the thought, Pat seized a large sauce-boat full of mayonnaise sauce, and presenting it with a bow to the General, purple in the face with his efforts to conceal the lobster, said: “Excellency, you have forgotten the sauce” (*Excellenz, Sie haben vergessen die Sauce*).

Like a true Prussian, the General did not take it smiling, but made a formal complaint, and there was “the devil to pay,” but the joke was certainly worth the candle in this case.

I used occasionally to meet Sir William Harcourt at luncheon parties, and he was certainly one of the most brilliant raconteurs with whom I have ever laughed. He had a somewhat grim Victorian exterior, and was often apt to browbeat the young. I was always determined to get over this defect in my seniors, and to extract what honey the bear might have concealed beneath his rough coat. I think I definitely made

good with Sir William on a certain occasion, when he remarked that few were well acquainted with the dates of the Kings of England. He was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and looked upon as *anathema maranatha* by my own class of landed proprietors. No one at table took up the challenge, so the Chancellor proceeded to reel them off from the days of King Arthur. When he got to King John, he made a slip of a few years, so I chipped in with the correct date, and the remark *sotto voce* that there was much to be said for King John's views as to landed property—that Magna Carta business at Runnymede had been a put-up job. This tickled the author of the *Hares and Rabbits Bill*, and of the Death Duties before they assumed their present form, and he addressed in future much of his conversation to me. Among things he said to me were: "I heard someone in the *entourage* remark to the Queen (Victoria): 'I hear they are going to make a great many peers.' 'Who are *they*?' asked the Queen."

Also concerning Lord Hartington, who afterwards became the silent Duke of Devonshire, and for so long a period presided over the fortunes of the Whigs, he remarked that he had never known him give anything to anybody. "For six years, when he was leading the Liberal Party, I went to him daily at Devonshire House. Found him always sitting at breakfast. He never offered me a chop. I had the greatest difficulty in making him give a political dinner. I finally said: 'The Duke will pay for it.' I then had difficulty with his Grace. Three such dinners, and three only, were given, virtually by me. When Burke, his secretary, was engaged to be married, I said to Hartington: you will have to give him a wedding present. 'Why

should I? I never gave anyone a wedding present in my life.' ”

Personally I immensely admired this magnificent solid stolidity of the late Duke of Devonshire, and Sir William's attempts to belittle him served, on the contrary, to increase my regard for that prototype of the Victorian British aristocrat. He carried this attitude through life, and my friend Dodo Benson's witty definition in his *Mad Annual* deserves to be recorded here. The illustration depicts the Duke with his hat tilted over his brow, seated on a bench of the House of Lords. The legend runs: “It is said that I am in the habit of falling asleep in the House of Lords. I do not know of what interest this can be to anyone. It may possibly occur again.”

There was a certain Russian diplomatist, honorary member of a club frequented by the late Duke of Devonshire, who went there every day about six o'clock, met this Russian, who was an ultra-expert *écarté* player, and almost invariably lost to him, before it was time to dress for dinner, between twenty and fifty pounds, according to the run of the cards. The Duke sat there absolutely stolid, as if he were carved by Grinling Gibbons to represent the Duke of Devonshire.

Sir William was very free with his criticisms, and referring to a certain rather rickety peer, who had been objected to as Master of the Horse on the ground that he did not know one when he saw it, told me he had retorted: “It's the best post for him: as he can't walk, no other would be possible.”

Among other interesting people whom I saw in the 'nineties was Kaïd Maclean, who had a curious adventure in the course of his campaigning. He vouched for the absolute truth of the statement, but always added

to his narrative the stipulation that it should not be made public during his lifetime. The story was as follows: "I was taken prisoner by the Mahdi, and kept for some days in close confinement to my tent, with sentries guarding it outside, day and night. Needless to say, the days were heavy on my hands, as I had nothing to read, and my time was chiefly spent wondering whether the Government would come to terms with my captors before or after my being shot. One night I retired, when it was dark, upon the litter-bed in a corner of the tent. The white awning of the tent did not make it pitch dark, though it must have been quite late at night, when I awoke with a start from my first sleep. I saw, standing a few feet from my bed, an old man in a long flowing white robe. He had a beard, which fell to his middle; his hands were folded one upon the other, and he was gazing down upon me intently with dark glowing eyes. Their aspect was benignant, and his face struck me as infinitely noble and spiritual. I much wished to speak to him, but found, to my surprise, that I was not able to utter a syllable. Gradually the figure moved away towards the entrance of the tent, and finally disappeared. I was quite convinced that someone had obtained leave to look at me when I was sleeping, and asked the Arab soldier, who brought my water and prison fare in the morning, who this could have been. At first he laughed at the idea, but when I gave a minute description of my visitor, his whole aspect changed, his eyes flamed, and he threw himself upon the ground, which he kissed, exclaiming, 'You have seen the Prophet. He has appeared to others in this valley. All will now be well with you: you will be released to-day or very soon. But why did you not speak to him? If you

had spoken, he would have granted you the wish of your heart, and all would have been well with you for the rest of your life.'

"The order for my release came that very day."

Such is the curious narrative told by Kaïd Maclean to my friend Lady Ward, wife of Sir Edward Ward, G.C.E., and by her recently handed on to me for inclusion in this volume. To my mind it acquires additional interest from being the unique experience of the kind by a man of first-rate practical ability, whose word, so far as I know, was never doubted during his life. I can well conceive, however, that he would not have cared to face the sallies of his friends if it had been made public in his lifetime.

A very different figure, much in the public eye at this period of the 'nineties and long before, was the philosopher, Herbert Spencer, one of the pillars of the Athenæum Club. The story still runs there that it was Spencer who made the famous and often quoted billiard gibe. At any rate, he was fond of a game, and also fond of winning it. Soundly beaten by a newcomer to the billiard-room, he turned from him at the end of the game with the remark: "The excellence of your play is clear evidence of a wasted youth."

This is not the place to talk of Spencer's thought, but it is permissible to remark upon his insularity in respect to the writers of his own and other times. My friend Croce has pointed out that much of his work had been already done and surpassed by other critics, whom he had not taken the pains to consult, with the result that he was often out of date at the time of first publication. For instance, on October 22, 1892, he wrote to the *Figaro*, that owing to stress of his own work, and to the fact that Renan's interests

rarely coincided with his, he had never read a line of the author of the *Vie de Jésus*. To my mind that is an astonishing confession in a great philosopher, it would have been deplorable in the case of a far smaller man. Spencer sat on the Library Committee of the London Library with my uncle, Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff. When the proposal to approve the acquisition of a second edition of *Balzac*, owing to the great demand for them by members, guaranteed as genuine by the librarian, Spencer objected, and when pressed by the rest of the Committee for his reason, found nothing better to say than that they would take up "too much shelf-room." I believe Spencer would have chopped up the first folio of Shakespeare (whom probably, like Plato and Renan, he had never read), to make room for *First Principles*.

Herbert Spencer has lost much of his prestige of late years, though he has been translated into most European and some Oriental languages. The Japanese, I believe, still read him, but they are now apparently revising their views, if not their methods, to judge from the pirating of my translation of B. Croce's *Philosophy of the Practical*, which was used as the original, for translation into Japanese, without a word of acknowledgment to Croce or to myself. If translators are traitors (*traduttori traditori*), what is to be said of the translators of translators? Only, I suppose, that they are Japanese. But I do not wish to suggest that I do not admire and like the Japanese as a nation, for that would be false. Pirating of popular books is not unknown in the Western world.



## CHAPTER XI

### ON LEAVE IN ENGLAND

Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff—Belling the Cat at Downing Street—Grant Duff and Disraeli—Gladstone—Joseph Chamberlain—Mr. John Morley and India—What is a Gentleman—Robert Browning and Aubrey de Vere—Tennyson—Lord Acton—The *Tempo* has changed—*The Club*—Harry Cust and the Souls—Calvé and Mascagin—Harry Labouchere.

ON returning to England from Homburg on leave, I applied to be moved to Brussels, but this turned out to be impossible, as there was already an attaché to that Legation. They offered me the Hague instead, and this I accepted on condition that I might remain six weeks in England. Most of this time I spent at York House, Twickenham, with my uncle and aunt, Sir Mountstuart and Lady Grant Duff. In Mr. Bullock's table, printed in this volume, showing the literary qualities that entered the Gordon family with the Duff marriage, my uncle will be found in his place. There can now be no doubt that he has made a permanent contribution to our literature. All British diarists must stand below Pepys, but Grant Duff holds an honourable place on a level with Evelyn. Such acute minds as that of my friend, Mr. A. B. Walkley of the *Times*, so well known as a critic, find nightly solace from the sober pages of the *Diary* illuminated with so many good stories and reflecting so faithfully the solid unshakeable position of a mid-Victorian politician and man of the world. Mr. Walkley has assured me that this book is one of his "pillow books." Grant Duff was an admirable host, and contrived to

see an immense number of interesting people. He was alert for practically the whole fifty years which the *Diary* covers, not only to political and social life, but also to literary and artistic life. I have spent more pleasant evenings under his roof at York House and Lexden Park, Colchester, whither he later migrated, than anywhere else. The journal closes with the accession of Edward VII. My uncle was intimate with all the principal statesmen between 1870 and the accession of King Edward, though with some of them his relations varied very considerably during that period. With Gladstone, for instance, he had been on the most intimate terms until the Irish Home Rule Bill, and had twice been in his Government (India and Colonies—Under-Secretary of State). But when that measure came into the foreground he decided to leave his former leader, at the cost of his well-earned peerage and of his position as an active statesman. But such sacrifices to principle were so common in British politics at that time, and before, that they hardly attracted attention. To-day they may appear more remarkable.

My uncle Mountstuart Grant Duff told me of Gladstone, that when he was in the room with the members of the Liberal Party there was never for a moment any question as to who was the leader. Any other person—be it Joe Chamberlain or Morley or some other stalwart of those days—was obviously out of the question. Anecdotes of Gladstone's habit of conversing with certain women in and about Piccadilly at one time flew from lip to lip. Certain members of his Government consulted about it and decided that the Chief was to be warned of his attentions being misinterpreted. The question was, however, who was to bell the cat? A certain politician who had been loud-



DOUGLAS AINSLIE, 1922.

*Photograph by Claude Harris.*

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voiced in condemnation eventually agreed to perform the task, provided he was left alone to tackle the Premier. One of Gladstone's breakfast parties was fixed upon, and the hero in question lingered alone in the room after a dozen of his guests had departed. Gladstone stood in front of the fireplace, his black eyes glowing like furnaces. There was a pause. "Have you anything particular to say to me?" at last inquired the Chief. Their eyes met, and no doubt Gladstone well knew what was in the wind behind those other eyes. "No, no, I have nothing special to say," stammered the protagonist. Gladstone took down the Bible as the door closed upon his critic.

I came in for just a few breakfast parties, which were the rage in the 'eighties and 'nineties. My uncle told me that he had never known Disraeli well, and much regretted that he had not done so when the opportunity presented itself. They used often to leave the House of Commons together, late in the evening, and Disraeli at one time rather sought him out because, as he cynically observed, it was pleasant to take a few steps with someone who could not want to obtain a favour, and that could only be done by associating with one's political opponents. Frequently Disraeli would press him to come to supper, but Grant Duff always refused, as he rose early in order to attend a breakfast-party. In later life he much regretted that he had sacrificed Dizzy's suppers to Gladstone's breakfasts. The former must have been incomparably more interesting, because Dizzy was a poet as well as a politician whose imaginative writing survives and will survive for many a day. My uncle read him a great deal towards the end of his life. It is amusing to observe how often the hard-bitten Liberal ends his career.

by entering upon the primrose path' paved with copies of the *Morning Post*.

I only heard Gladstone speak twice, once in the Commons and once at Oxford, when he came down to advocate Free Trade. I disagreed altogether with his views on this question (which is insoluble as a philosophic question, for it depends upon whose interests are in view) being in favour of Protection, but from the moment he began speaking, with his flaming eyes and appearance of unshakeable conviction, I fully realized what the impact of his personality must be for those who came into daily intercourse with him. When discussing the situation at the time of the first Home Rule Bill, my uncle observed of Gladstone that while he was studying a question, turning it over in his mind, there were moments when it was possible to suggest alternative views with a chance of their being accepted. But once he had come to a conclusion, one was up against a wall of steel if one ventured a modification, and his mortal enemy if persistent. Gladstone's true sphere should have been the Church: he would have done far less harm there than he did in politics.

Joseph Chamberlain came to York House soon after his second marriage with his charming Virginian wife. He had organization on the brain at the time and kept repeating to me that what the country needed was organization. "See what I have achieved with it in Birmingham": then he produced a long statement of what he had achieved there. But I felt that he was out of his element in the atmosphere of culture that pervaded York House. He had an exclusively practical mind, but his ability on his own subjects amounted to genius. I last saw him in a little restaurant at Florence, just before his final breakdown. He was doing him-

self well, as he always did. Yellow wine flowed and an immense cigar glowed as soon as the repast was over.

I remember his dilating over a similar cigar at York House upon the utter unreliability of Lord Randolph Churchill. He said that Lord Randolph had assured him that he would not move rejection of a certain Bill, but leave it to Chamberlain, who, acting upon this statement, prepared his speech and was about to deliver it—on the point of rising to his feet—when he saw Randolph Churchill already risen and evidently about to begin speaking upon it. He put this down to extreme nervousness of temperament and inability to restrain himself any longer. He concluded by saying: "Churchill must have suffered agonies before his speech."

Another politician, at one time intimate with my uncle, was Mr. John Morley (now a Viscount as all good Radicals should be). Morley had followed Gladstone on the Home Rule question, and thereby made sure of his peerage and higher office. It was a public calamity when he was made Secretary of State for India. I have it from a foreign diplomatist, now an Allied Ambassador, who had much State business at the India Office, that the whole of his policy was disastrous to the maintenance of British authority in that great country. This policy has been carried on by Mr. Montagu. But this book is not a political treatise, so I shall not dwell upon the subject.

I remember being present upon the last occasion he lunched with Grant Duff. Austin Dobson and Mr. Edmund Gosse also came down to luncheon, and there was a good deal of desultory conversation. Robert Browning I never met, though he used to come a good deal in earlier days, but he did not make himself popular with

the female part of the establishment, for I remember my aunt telling me that he always struck her as being "not quite a gentleman." What is a gentleman? The significance of the word seems to vary with the speaker. I cling to the old acceptation that it should and does mean a man belonging to a certain group of families with pedigree and certain traditions. A gentleman can be a criminal and yet remain a gentleman, because he can't help it. The notion of a nature's gentleman seems to me to represent an attempt to steal the prestige that hangs around the name of gentleman and to apply it incorrectly to the possessor of certain moral and intellectual qualities. Why not call the latter a "good" or a "clever" man and remain true to the proper use of language?

I see my friend, E. F. Benson, in one of his recent books, reproduces the remark that Browning is reputed to have made upon being asked if he liked Dobson's and his friends' poems: "I don't care about carved cherry-stones." That seems rather hard on Dobson, who was an exquisite worker in little, and has left us a sheaf of verse that will make a pleasant volume when coupled with Andrew Lang's *Ballads in Blue China*.

Aubrey de Vere was a poet of greater intensity than Lang or Dobson. I used to meet him occasionally at Lady Constance Leslie's, where he would casually remark in the middle of a big luncheon party in the middle of the season: "I wish that people would bear more clearly in mind than they do that the angels are always watching us and hear all we say." I could not refrain, I remember, from smiling when I thought of what must be their opinion of the average London luncheon party. He told me that he had known Robert Browning



very well, and had carefully studied his works : " Unfortunately he is not a poet, but he is a great thinker in verse." I agree that Browning is greater as a psychologist, for three-quarters of his work is just that, but there remains a quarter of it with true lyrical quality. When Croce finds time to deal with Browning as he has with Shakespeare, and apply to him the critical method of his *Æsthetic*, the truth of this statement will be generally admitted.

My uncle told me the following little trifle about Tennyson which pleased me, and has always had a niche in my memory. During his yachting expedition the Laureate was asked to recite Locksley Hall to a company of crowned heads and coronets. He cheerfully acceded to the request, *beating time on the shoulder of the Emperor of Russia*. That, I think, is quite delightful, and I wish that all poets would remember to do likewise on parallel occasions. The minor ones might be put to death for *lèse majesté*, but they would perish in a good cause.

A little later in the same year at the Hague, Mrs. Moreton, who was then lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Albany, told me that Tennyson, upon being asked by the Duchess to read one of the *Idylls of the King*, said : " That is a royal plagiarism." " Why? " " Because Princess Mary asked me to read exactly the same piece."

I wish I had known Tennyson on his agreeable days, even to the extent Lord Sligo tells me that he knew him when a boy, living not far from the poet in the Isle of Wight. They were a party of irrepressible children, for whom the great man had a good deal of gruff affection. One of the chief employments of a half-holiday afternoon used to be to *pretend to be tourists*

lying in wait for the poet. As soon as he saw, or rather thought he saw his tormentors coming, the slouch hat would bob rapidly up and down above the hedge as he hastened away down the nearest by-path. They were convinced that Tennyson really rather counted upon being hunted by celebrity-mongers, and would have felt it bitterly if their attentions had fallen off !

I think it was my friend, Mrs. Woods, who told me that she was present when a determined young man decided to make the conquest of the Laureate. He button-holed him after dinner one summer's evening, and poured anecdote upon anecdote into Tennyson's unwilling ear. Tennyson merely grunted during this performance, and upon its conclusion spoke as follows : " Young man, I don't *know* who you are, and I can't *hear* what you say." The tone was such as to preclude further overtures.

Among the *habitués* of York House was Lord Acton, who enjoyed a prodigious reputation, which I believe started with Gladstone. He used to spend almost the whole day reading at the Athenæum, and my uncle always referred to him as a well of knowledge. He was, however, a well down which it was very, very difficult to lower a bucket, and almost impossible to draw it up again. The lectures that he gave at Cambridge, though full of learning, lacked that command of an immense material which only great writers like Croce possess. Acton was very apt to become discursive ; he was also allusive and assumed that his interlocutor spent his whole time reading in a similar manner. He was a most amiable, kindly man, with little knowledge of persons, and I have seen him go out of his way to press a volume of metaphysics upon a Foreign Office clerk altogether alien to such studies. He was

omnivorous as a reader, and I remember once assisting him on with his coat ; out of the pocket protruded a blue cover. " A philosophical or historical pamphlet ? " I inquired. " Oh no, that is *Tit-Bits* : I always make a point of reading it, there is so much in it that I do not know and cannot find anywhere else." He had nothing of the artist about him, as is, I think, indicated by his having his enormous library of books all bound exactly alike at ninepence a volume—dark cloth with white label for the title. I think it would drive me mad to have all my favourite authors gazing at me in uniform, like convicts on parade.

Another friend of my uncle's, Lord de Tabley, had, on the contrary, very keen poetic and artistic feeling, and has left some verse which, if not of the highest quality, reflects at any rate a lofty and generous soul.

On his return from India, my uncle interested himself in the old dining and literary clubs and societies of London. He was a member of most of these, such as the Roxburgh Club, to which we owe some exquisite reprints of early literature. His contribution was, I think, a history of the club, which is now quite out of print. He was also a member of Grillon's, the well-known breakfast club, where notable hob-nobbers were Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, Lord Justice Sir James Stephen, Lord Arthur Russell and many another worthy and learned gentleman eloquent in his (tea) cups. That splendid galaxy of leading Victorians has given way to a Georgian society, which I shall never venture to criticize, beyond saying that the *tempo* of life seems to have changed and many of the old values to have declined, giving place to others, which seem to me less attractive.

Sir George Errington was one of the most agreeable

frequenters of York House. He was a Catholic, and I believe the first to go on a semi-official mission to the Pope. He used often to entertain me at the Cosmopolitan, which was another institution favoured by my uncle, now, I think, no longer existing.

*The Club*, founded by Dr. Johnson, of course, still flourishes, and in my uncle had a faithful and devoted honorary secretary. He wrote a history of the institution. I remember my uncle telling me that before the Turf Club had fixed upon its present appellation, that of "The Club" had been selected in ignorance of the existence of "*The Club*." It was pointed out to them that they were just a *leetle* too late in their choice of that title—about a couple of hundred years.

The Cosmopolitan possessed a "habitation and abode," but I do not think that *The Club*, with its ancient records and exiguous list of members has ever been otherwise than a migrant from one hotel to another. There were wonderful tales about missing Prime Ministers running up against strayed Lord Chancellors in strange hotels, and Chief Justices colliding with Poets Laureate in obscure corridors, all vainly seeking *rendezvous* for the dinner.

The mention of Lord Arthur Russell reminds me of the pleasant parties given by Lady Arthur during the season in Audley Square. Lady Arthur was a Mademoiselle de Peyronet, and had the true tradition of the *salon*, though she suffered to some extent from reserve of manner, not so common among the French as among ourselves. But the receptions were very pleasant, and there was some really good literary and historical talk mixed up with a mild percentage of social frivolities. "Let us talk about string," used to be the signal for a turning of the attention to dances

of the day. There was always a substratum of solid achievement among the men who frequented these parties—the merely social were not invited. They differed in this respect from those given by a charming and beautiful Duchess during the babyhood of the present century, though these, too, were supposed to be literary and artistic. On one occasion, her Grace was found by some of her guests perusing a sonnet which had been sent to her by an aspirant for her favour. “It’s quite pretty,” she said, glancing through it, “but I wonder why he *will* call me Psish?” Upon its being pointed out to her that the word was usually pronounced Psyché, and in classical literature stood for the soul, she asked what stood for the body in classical literature.

Talking of Psyché, about this time the much-vaunted “Souls” came into prominence and prospered exceedingly until, as someone neatly observed, they became the Slips. Harry Cust was well-known as one of the protagonists. I used often to talk with him, and sometimes lunched in Delahaye Street, whence they migrated to Kensington. He has already appeared as captain of the Oppidans when I was at Eton, and take him all round and at his best, he stood out head and shoulders above his own generation and the one that followed, as a talker. Not perhaps as a writer, though black and white pearl sonnets and other poetical efforts had distinct quality. Harry was the spoilt child of fortune and the fair sex. His good looks and cleverness and social position were between them the undoing of him as an eminent man. He was too brilliant on the surface ever to concentrate upon any subject with sufficient intensity to acquire great reputation. Like a shallow, rapid stream he ran through exquisite

tropical country, revelling in the flowers that adorned his banks, and in the birds of rare plumage that jostled one another in the air as they flew to drink of his waters. That touch of spoilt-child, petulant audacity was most attractive and entertaining when one was not oneself the victim of it. As editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* for Mr. Astor, this quality really made the paper an immense success. His advertisements and leaders took the breath away and the penny out of the pocket. I used often to stroll with him from the St. James's Club, when we happened to lunch there, to Charing Cross Road and enter the editorial sanctum. Occasionally he would insist upon my writing a review for him, and I remember once becoming enthusiastic over a work upon *Emblems and Charms*, by Rolfe, the British Consul at Naples. Harry wrote me that he was delighted with my review, and asked to see the book. I sent it to him and could never get it back, though generally he was given to pitching twenty or thirty volumes away at a time as unworthy the notice of the "P.M.G." He would glance at the title, apply a highly coloured epithet to the author, and then hurl the unfortunate volume to the end of the long room, where I suppose it was eventually garnered by the office boy as "perks." Those were vastly amusing days when Harry reigned over the *Pall Mall*. I remember the terrible commotion there was among the initiated when he decided that Mr. Astor's own literary productions were not up to the standard of Mr. Astor's paper and resolutely refused to print them! He was, of course, quite right, but the situation was certainly—exceptional. Finally, as of course he knew must be the case, he was fired out; but while it lasted it was as gorgeous—as fireworks.

There was a rival brotherhood, known as the Worms, started in opposition to the Souls. They were a gay and musical group, who frankly enjoyed life without any wonderful poses. Their headquarters, for a short time, was “Monsieur and Madame’s” *i.e.*, Monsieur and Madame Blumenthal’s in Kensington Gore. “Monsieur” was a musician, and arranged the most charming concerts. Madame was altogether (she said) unmusical, and invited the most charming people to attend them. “Monsieur” used to take his stand at the drawing-room door, with its array of gilded chairs, and whisper the dramatic “hush!” prelude to sweetest sounds as rustling skirts and rippling smiles settled silently—and hastily—down to enjoy. Then followed the dramatic moments of supper and unrestrained babble. The cream of artistic social London was to be seen at these parties, for monsieur and madame were very much the fashion, and to be invited to dwell for a season with them at their Swiss chalet was to be honoured exceedingly, both as man—and Worm.

I have met several Carmens off the Stage, but none in my opinion, either off it or on it, equalled Calvé, who, I am glad to say, is still among us. She had the temperament of the rôle and sang and acted it perfectly. That she carried the temperamental quality into ordinary life I only realized upon one occasion, in ‘ninety-three, when there was a *matinée* for the Foreign Press Association Fund. I came with a friend who had offered to accompany any singer who might have been without her pianist. We were duly introduced behind the scenes of the Palace Theatre, and almost at once the psychic temperature rose. Calvé is sitting on a bench facing me as I enter the artist’s room. She

is beating a tattoo with her crimson shoe and is evidently impatient. Introduced, I make one or two remarks, not quite banal perhaps, and then withdraw to a safe distance from this distinguished volcano. A moment after enter Mascagni. She springs up and with an eloquent "Ah, Mascagni!" throws herself theatrically into the composer's arms. He plays up admirably, and the ceiling becomes the sky of Italy. I am then presented to the Maestro and we have a little conversation. The manager approaches the diva with infinite precautions. Would she be so kind as to sing next, or next but one? Then occurs a really fine eruption of French and Italian, hurled partly at the obsequious manager, partly at the absent accompanist. "Non, je ne chanterai pas!" Vainly is Monsieur Du Sautoy suggested, a perfect accompanist. No! there is but one man that treads the earth able to accompany the diva—and he is absent. Her eyes flame; she stamps and whirls round the room as though expecting the absent one to pop up from under one of the benches. Then a really magnificent exit on the top note (of anger, not of melody): "The world shall ring with his treatment of me to-morrow" (this in French). All of us, including the Maestro, look very contrite as she disappears up the stairs to the exit. I turn to Mademoiselle Susanne Reichenberg, who is to do a duologue and is seeking "mon Coquelin." The afternoon proceeds and the applause from the front of the house reaches every corner of the theatre. There is much talent in the cause of the Foreign Press Association. Even Calvé is forgotten. Suddenly a wonderful voice at my elbow: "Eh bien, Monsieur, vous voyez, je suis revenue"—and there, indeed, she is—Calvé the diva, radiant and wreathed in the roses of



an immense bouquet with a silver band. The fit of anger has vanished; the sky is serene; she accepts the offer of the more than competent Du Sautoy, who accompanies her in Carmen selections—and when these are over the Comte de Paris has split his right hand glove applauding, and comes tumbling down the absurdly narrow staircase to congratulate her.

What it is to be a diva in her prime!

But I feel that I should really be packing my *penates* and "proceeding" to the Hague, where I am overdue. As I do so I may just mention Henry Labouchere's original method of "proceeding" to Pekin from Petersburg, when he was in the Diplomatic Service. He was expected by several boats in the Far East, but did not put in an appearance. The Foreign Office began to get anxious about him and telegraphed to Petersburg to know when he had started and where he was. No answer for some weeks, either from Petersburg or from his London address. At last a letter reached the Office from Nijni Novgorod. It was from Henry Labouchere, saying that he had striven to obey the orders of the Office and "proceed" to Pekin, but being short of funds and having received no draft from the Office, his progress might be slow, as he had decided to walk to Pekin, and as they saw he had reached Nijni Novgorod. In the course of a year or so, shoe leather and weather permitting, he hoped to reach his new post.

As a letter of resignation, this was original, like so much done by this quaint, sardonic personage, whose great dread in life was to be caught doing a good action. He loved to pile up the agony of his own iniquities—base desertion of friends, cynical contempt for women, etc., and I have often chuckled

intimately at his dinner-parties, to observe inquiring strangers hardly able to swallow their *Suprême de Côtelettes Soubise* for horror at the enormities of their host. That these were largely imaginary goes without saying, and his kind deeds and kindness of heart were carefully concealed behind the highly polished exterior of a man of the world.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE HAGUE AND DIPLOMACY

The Hague—Sir Horace Rumbold—Sir Francis Bertie—Colleagues at the Hague—Baron Tomtit—Lionel Bonham—My Cousin Sir Evelyn Grant Duff, British Minister at Berne—Prince Poniatowski and King Milan—Storm in a Delft Teacup—Prince or Waiter?—Marquis of Dufferin—Paris Embassy—Too Great to Care—Garibaldi's Slipper—Cult of the Turf.

I SHALL always remember my first meeting Labouchere after I had been writing dramatic criticism for *Truth* for seven years, during which he had never set foot in the office while I was there. "It appears you are on my staff: I am delighted to make your acquaintance. And pray, how is the British stage? I think we may confidently hope for the worst."

What a raconteur he was! Essentially non-dialectic however. It was far better not to pull him up, but to murmur at intervals in a shocked tone: "How very dreadful! Really, Mr. Labouchere, I should not have thought you capable of behaving in that way"—or something of the sort. Then the old gentleman (for I knew him only in his lonely Florentine villa, retired from the world) was in the seventh heaven of delight and would try to make eyes come yet wider open with astonishing revelations of his own astuteness and of base advantage taken of those highly placed. It was really a kind of inverted Romanticism: Labby loved to boast his mythological misdeeds as others their equally mythological virtues.

He told me that fifty years ago he had seen Florence as a poor young man with his future to make. There he had decided, if possible, to retire in his old age,

and had exactly carried out his programme, selling his house in Westminster for the exact sum which the Villa Voronzoff had cost.

While I have been holding forth about the former proprietor of *Truth*, the vessel which is to land me at Rotterdam has been ploughing the waves, and lest any reader should fail to discover any close connection with Labby and the Netherlands, I beg to point out that he had numerous Dutch relations, who still flourish in the Hague and at Amsterdam, so that this closely knit narrative cannot be accused of wandering off the path, though the writer pleads guilty of going the longest and the most flowery way to his destination.

On arrival at the Hague, I found myself in an entirely new world, of which I took some little time to fully understand the manners as an anecdote, which I shall shortly (in every sense) recount, will show.

My new Chief, Sir Horace Rumbold, was charming; I always found him excellent company and enjoyed his hospitality. He never burdened one with dispatches to copy, and when he had ascertained that one fully sympathized with him in his hatred and detestation of Sir Francis Bertie, then a power at the Foreign Office, all was well. I hastened to do this at once, although I had never been acquainted with Sir Francis (afterwards Lord Bertie). Sir Horace was obviously a nervous, quick-tempered man, keen to resent anything like a slight or injury, and I can well imagine how his brown eyes must have flashed when they met those of Sir Francis; how his slim, poplar-like figure must have swayed with rage as they cut verbally into one another's vitals. There was a story of Sir Francis at the Foreign Office which always tickled me and is, I believe, perfectly true. It was simply this: he

was in the habit of cursing and swearing at his subordinates, using especially the most violent terms to a newly arrived junior, which must be supplied by the imagination *ad lib*. This went on for some days, until Sir Francis came into the room with some dispatch which he asserted in the usual unmeasured language had been miscopied or misconstrued by his subordinate. When he had finished, what was his astonishment to see the said clerk silently removing his jacket and proceeding to tuck up his sleeves. When this had been done, the young man spoke. "Sir Francis, I am going to thrash you, or try to thrash you for your gross insolence to me, unless you immediately offer me your apologies. I know quite well that I shall have to leave the Service, but I would rather that to being sworn at by a damned bully in season and out."

Sir Francis gasped with amazement: a long course of unimpeded oaths had never produced such a result as this. When he had sufficiently recovered, he tendered his hand to the young fellow with sincere apologies and backed his career in future for all he was worth.

The pendant to this is a little story about dear Sir Horace, who always had my sympathy in this as in other matters. An important Britannic personage was about to leave the Hague. Sir Horace wished to bid her good-bye at the railway station. Owing to a mistake of his coachman, he was set down there when the train was on the point of starting. He rushed along the platform to the barrier, where he was confronted by a stalwart and obdurate ticket collector, who insisted upon his producing his "platform ticket." Vainly Sir Horace protested that he would purchase the ticket (price a halfpenny) when the train had left,

but the man refused to let him past without one. This was too much for the excitable Minister Plenipotentiary, who was not without some knowledge of boxing, gathered in the course of a chequered youth. He let him have a left to the jaw, which sent the obdurate one sprawling his full length on the platform. Of course a crowd collected and there was the "devil to pay," what with the outraged dignity of the man and his innumerable relatives and the (justifiable) protestations of the Dutch Government. The matter was finally settled, like so many others, with a cheque to bearer, and the Netherlands consented to retain Sir Horace as Plenipotentiary. Lady Rumbold was a suave, quiet person, who might be described as the Ladyship from Sloane Street, on the analogy of that excellent *sobriquet* applied to Ralli, who used to be known as "The Belgravian." He rarely emerged from its precincts. Her Ladyship was altogether Sloane Street at its best and brightest when the ladies are shopping at the Knightsbridge end—at her worst she was the first turning to the left.

My colleagues at the Hague were most agreeable, pleasant people, and for their sakes one would have liked to spend years at the Hague. Head of the Chancellery was Charles Des Graz, my good and gay friend, afterwards Minister to Montenegro and to Servia, and then in South America. A Cambridge running blue, he was hard to beat on the tennis court; invincible at that other court which has no rules except those of winning if possible—I refer to the court held whenever ladies are present. He and I used to go over to Klingendaal to the hospitable De Brienens for luncheons and lawn-tennis and dinner-parties galore. The Baroness was well known both at the Hague and

in London society—she dwelt in Belgrave Square—the Baron was a man of the world, just as much at home in the Bachelors' Club as in the Aristocrat's Club at the Hague. The Dutch used to say he liked London too much, which meant that he actually liked a change from their society. The aristocrats at the Hague were tremendous sticklers for dignity, and I remember the Baron once telling me that Baron van Huysum van Kopperdink van Oolenstraad (name imaginary) had replied to one of his invitations to come and dine, with a refusal based upon the omission upon the envelope containing the invitation of one of the Baron's titles, and a reference to his frequent absences in England as the probable reason for this omission. De Brien en at once replied, regretting the omission of the title, but adding a postscript to this effect: "On glancing again at your envelope I see you have omitted *two* of my titles: this, no doubt, is due to dwelling too long in the same place."

Des Graz inducted me into the society of the Hague, and we went round together showering cards on colleagues and notables, as one is bound to do in diplomacy. Sir George and Lady Bonham were also most kind in presenting me to the chief Court officials, including the Lord Chamberlain, a certain Baron whose name sounded exactly like Baron Tomtit van Hammer and Tongs van Nastywitch. And his name, especially the central part of it, did not belie him, as you shall hear. I had not been many weeks at the Hague when there was a party at the Palace, at which I was duly presented to Queen Wilhelmina, a most seductive little girl at this period, going round the diplomatic circle with her long hair falling over her white frock, and neat little white shoes and stockings. She had brief conversa-

tions with almost everyone and was followed, but at a considerable distance, by one of her ladies-in-waiting. With me she discussed skating, and I remember that once the subject was mooted I entered with her Majesty upon the chief points of the art, ancient and modern, roller or blade, English or Continental style, with so much vim and erudition and detail that I believe we should still be there if a voice suggesting a further move in the direction of my neighbour (the Italian Secretary) had not obliged me to cut it short. Still, some ice was cut and I always enjoyed the occasional glimpses of an Alice who had not needed to go through the looking glass to make a wonderland of her palace. I remember the sinking at heart with which I learned that she had become affianced to a German.

The Bonhams had a delightful family, and their eldest son, Lionel, who was later in the Brigade of Guards, was one of my best and warmest friends. Many a wild evening we spent at the old Savoy,—so much more homey than the present vast expanse—inside and outside the Pinafore Room. Lionel married a charming and beautiful Miss Gaskell. This lady was very nervous and, I believe, gave him a good deal of anxiety as to her health: she travelled to Japan upon one occasion, and the last time that ever I saw him was at Naples,, years after I had left the career. He had just gone to see her off on this lengthy trip and had somehow somewhere discovered that I was in Naples. He came and rapped on my door in the Hotel Vesuvio when I was busied with the writing of my *Song of the Stewarts* (Prelude). He was to leave the next morning for Macedonia as head of the International Police at that time looking after the Macedonian



salad—always a pretty mess. Something in the *Macédoine* disagreed with poor Lionel, for he fell ill and died there within six weeks of our last meeting. We sat up till daybreak that evening and made all the joyous memories of old London nights live again, till we parted with a handclasp on the very top note of gaiety and good fellowship. Neither of us of course dreamed that we should never meet again. Thus is it well to part.

Edith Bonham, who was later married to my first cousin, Sir Evelyn Grant Duff, K.C.M.G., was a girl of fifteen when I was at the Hague, attractive and lively. One could not be expected to perceive the latent force of character which enabled her so admirably to second her husband's efforts to cope with the appalling difficulties presented by the situation at Berne upon the outbreak of war. The Staff was quite insufficient and the Foreign Office did not strengthen it appreciably. One item alone would have been sufficient to overwhelm ordinary folk, and that was the enormous number of tourists left stranded high and dry in Switzerland, either without funds or with funds nearly exhausted. No banks would cash letters of credit or look at cheques. They simply swarmed round the British Legation, looking upon that as the last plank between them and starvation. I remember a long telegram reaching Aberdeenshire when I was at Delgaty, from some Aberdeenshire acquaintances, begging and imploring my father to telegraph a request to his nephew, the Minister, to give special attention to the senders of the telegram, who were using their last penny to send it. The tourist question was but one of many with which they had to deal, not the least being the attempt to assassinate the British Minister

Plenipotentiary, by causing a heavy mirror to fall upon him as he sat at table on Christmas night. He was saved by the mere chance of accepting an invitation to dine out, that very afternoon. The heavy mirror crashed down upon his empty seat. The cords by which it was hung were found to have been rubbed almost through so as to give way within a short time. It was traced to a German in their employ in whom confidence was misplaced. The Germans hated the British Minister with a special brand of hatred, and I must say he had given them some reason for this with his caustic and stinging remarks. He knew them in fact thoroughly well. He had long lived in Germany and once won a beer-drinking prize at Heidelberg. I forget the total of mugs of beer, but I remember that the number definitely convinced me that the less could contain the greater—in German beer-drinking.

Lady Grant Duff is one of the very few women who have ever been thanked by name in the House of Commons for their patriotic work.

Well, to return to the Hague in the early 'nineties, I must say that it was very pleasant, and I often dwell upon or rather traverse it in memory. Few people, of my acquaintance at least, seem to know how to enjoy their memories. They are apt to dwell upon some one point and to contemplate that alone, pleasant or unpleasant, whereas with the help of a date or two, it is possible to get the general sense of a period that one has traversed, all of it tinged with the glamour of the past. Thus I can any day invite myself to join one of the dinner-parties at the Legation and go on from there to the Club of the Nobles, where we played or watched the playing of the game of windt—I can evoke the whole environment—crimson-plushed flunkeys

with white hair, candelabra guttering occasionally, dissipated young and old men staking it with the one phrase: *Je vous fais votre reste*. "I bet you what you have on the table." Stakes used to vary there from a humble gold piece to thousands of francs, which reminds me of a delightful *mot* at another ultra-aristocratic club, the Cercle de la Rue Royale, at Paris. King Milan of Servia was taking the bank at baccarat and facing all comers with unlimited stakes. Big and little punters were crowding round the table and stakes varied from a louis to a hundred thousand francs. The bank was having a bad time and King Milan had been paying out on both sides for several deals. At one corner sat Prince Poniatowski of ancient Polish royal descent. He was staking a humble louis and winning it every time during the run against the bank. At last the King became annoyed at having to pay out this minute sum every time after distributing millions among the big punters, and remarked rather testily as he paid Poniatowski: "What a bore these small punters are with their eternal louis stakes." "When your Majesty has been dethroned even a year or two, you will find it difficult to raise a louis to play: the Poniatowskis have been dethroned two hundred years."

Charles Des Graz was the colleague of whom I saw most at the Hague, as we used to dine together several nights in the week, and it was then that we had our discussions about novels as mere pastime and novels as art. I believe that, like many people, he still looks upon the novel as a means of passing half an hour pleasantly or of getting off to sleep. Labouchere and many other successful practical men whom I have known had just this view and I

suppose that the vast majority of novels produced have no higher aim. I have no axe to grind, not being a novelist, but feel the highest respect for the genius of certain novelists, which comes next to the best poetry, and indeed *is* poetry. The rest are mere money-makers and where successful are in the same category as boots and waterproofs that keep out the water.

My adventure with Tits van Hammer and Tongen van Nastywitch would have made a good beginning for a novel, dealing with the diplomatic career and the extreme care necessary in dealing with officials at minor Courts. Both Sir George Bonham and Charles Des Graz introduced me to the Lord Chamberlain bearing the above malsonant titles, so the deed was doubly done before his persecutions begun. Very soon after one of the royal parties I heard indirectly that this Lord Chamberlain was deeply incensed at my neglecting to be introduced to him: I at once told several Dutch friends that this was not the case, and that I had made a point of it, as witnessed my excellent colleagues. He was a small, grisly personage, with a short, rather ragged beard and blue eyes, covered with decorations, and I remember that he spoke very inferior French. Needless to say, I did not spread abroad this description of him, but let it be known everywhere that certainly even if a newly arrived attaché to the Court of St. James's had not been presented to the Earl of Lathom, who was then Lord Chamberlain, I was quite sure he would not have made a fuss about it. I, on the other hand, having been presented, there was really no ground whatever for the accusation of haughty contempt of Holland by the proud Britain. But for weeks there was no end to this affair, and at every luncheon-party and every ball

it was sure to be served up with a simper for sauce. Finally, I went up to the old man myself and gave him my full name and address in London, Scotland and the Hague.

I believe if I were to return to the Hague to-day, the grandson of old Hammer and Tongs would let it generally be known that I had not been presented to his grandfather in the strict terms of the protocol.

This reminds me of an amusing incident that occurred some years ago at a party in London, where a frivolous girl remarked of a certain attaché of Embassy that she did not believe he really was Prince of Strada Ferrata and Duke of Galicia, but a waiter. At the next party, at the same house, she found the same attaché waiting for her at the top of the stairs by the hostess. She shook hands with him and was going to pass on into the ballroom, but he held her firmly and said: "You remarked at the last dance that I was not the Prince of Strada Ferrata and Duke of Galicia, but a waiter." The poor girl blushed to the roots of her hair, but could not deny it. "I am now going to prove to you that you were wrong." Thereupon he led her up to an elderly gentleman bearing a broad ribbon across his shirt. "This is my Ambassador, his Excellency, Count ——" A long list of titles followed while he held her tight by the hand. "And this gentleman," said the Ambassador, bowing to the young lady, "is certainly the Prince of Strada Ferrata, Duke of Galicia, attached to my Embassy."

The penance was not over yet, for still holding her hand firmly, the Prince led her to a younger man with iron-gray hair standing near the Ambassador, to whom he introduced her and she again received the assurance of the Prince's identity. This was repeated in exactly

the same terms with *all* the members of the Embassy, who had assembled for that purpose at the ball.

Unity of sentiment is of course of great importance in an Embassy, and I think it was my father who once told me that in his experience at Petersburg at some big official dinner-party certain remarks rather uncomplimentary to Great Britain were made in one of the speeches, whereupon my godfather, Lord Napier and Ettrick, who was present with the whole of his Staff, and had a habit of carrying a large silk handkerchief loose in his hand, suddenly rose to his feet and remarked to Paget, the First Secretary of Embassy : "This won't do, Paget ; this will never do ; come along Paget." And with this he marched magnificently out of the room agitating the celebrated silk handkerchief and followed by his entire Staff. :

Which Paget of the many Pagets that have been, are, and will be, was this one, I cannot say, but can merely admire that successful family and hope to meet more and more of them. I was once magnificently entertained by four brothers Paget, including the late gallant Admiral Sir Alfred and General Paget in Hanover Square. They, I believe, were of the illustrious house of Anglesea, but another good friend of mine, Sir Richard Paget, upon being asked by one interested in pedigree if he were "an Anglesea Paget," is said to have replied : "Oh dear no ; *we* are little Pagets of our own."

My flitting from the Hague took place by night, and in disguise, lest I were seized by emissaries of Count Tits von Hammer and Tongen, and thrown into a dungeon for not being presented to him *en règle*. It was quite pleasant to tread the pavement of Piccadilly after being so long a promenader of the sands at

Sceveningen (pronounce *Scrravenhagen*, something like a rook cawing), that seaside resort near the Hague, which is so much pleasanter than it sounds in Dutch.

One of the first persons I ran into was an old friend who afterwards became distinguished in the law. He has often regaled me with spice from the courts, but on this occasion gave me details as to his intrigue with a certain well-known lady, which was being closely watched by a certain private detective firm employed by another well-known lady. Finally this got on his nerves, and he decided to put a stop to it. In order to do this, he told his cabman to draw up suddenly after driving fifty yards from his rooms. My friend jumped up, and there sure enough, just behind, was the private detective, an expert runner, a little out of breath, but caught in the act. " 'What the h—ll do you mean by following me about like this.' 'I beg pardon, sir, I'm a poor man, sir, obliged to do it, sir, to earn my bread. I'm sure you will understand me, sir, *because you and me's both of the same profession.*' " This lovely *naïveté* infuriated my friend, but he eventually relented, and made a business arrangement with the man, "who is not half a bad fellow." "I said to him: 'You may as well earn my money as well as her ladyship's so you go and watch her when you're not watching me, and I'll pay you the same.' The man was delighted, and ended by asking: 'May I follow you to-night, sir?' 'Certainly, I'm dining at my Club.' "

I remained some months in London before proceeding to my next post, which was Paris, where my future Chief was the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava. I had already met him at York House, and as an old friend and colleague of my uncle, he was very glad to welcome me in Paris. In my wildest dreams, however, I never

expected to receive such a letter as reached me from the Paris Embassy soon after my return from Paris.

BRITISH EMBASSY,  
PARIS,  
July 5, 1894.

DEAR MR. DOUGLAS AINSLIE,

We are entirely overcome with delight at the prospect of your honouring this Embassy with your presence.

Speaking for myself, I look forward with the greatest pleasure to seeing you upon my Staff and the Chancellery echoes my own eagerness. When will it suit you to come to us? This must of course entirely depend upon your convenience, but the sooner the better.

DUFFERIN AND AVA.

That was Lord Dufferin's way. He was exceedingly proud of his Sheridan blood, and no doubt the Sheridans have often kissed the Blarney Stone since the days of Richard Brinsley and the *School for Scandal*. Lord Dufferin, however, did not bely his flowery phrases, even when one was in actual intercourse with him, and although the type of letter, of which I have given a specimen above, at first made one suspect the Ambassador of having a little game at one's expense, so habitual was this mode of address with him, that I believe it had become "second nature." In respect of this phrase, perhaps some may not immediately recall Fontenelle's witty comment: "If that is second nature, I should like to know what is first."

Lord Dufferin had come nearly to the end of a distinguished career before he went to Paris, and when I was on his Staff he was obviously a tired man. Yet, as I say, he maintained his marvellously florid phraseology up to the last, so far as I was concerned, and ladies have told me that he always wrote to them, whatever their age, between eighteen and eighty, in



exactly the same way—like an ardent lover anxious and willing to obey their least behest. My uncle always used to say that Lord Dufferin's best work had been done in India and Canada. His *Letters from High Latitudes* date back to Petersburg days and were among my earliest studies.

Lord Dufferin had a considerable and justifiable confidence in the security of his own position, and the story is told of his being repeatedly seen at Constantinople, when he was Ambassador there, walking with a Levantine banker of rather doubtful antecedents. Upon being warned of the man's undesirability by some well-meaning busybody (such as always crop up to do the obviously better left alone), Lord Dufferin replied: "Yes, yes, I know, and have known for some time all you tell me about Monsieur Stokopotopoulos, but, on the other hand, it gives him immense satisfaction to be seen walking with me, and as it cannot possibly do me any harm, I have decided to continue the practice. I need hardly add how extremely grateful I am to you for your amiable and well-timed intervention."

Lord Frederick Hamilton tells us that his father, the Duke of Abercorn, used to be called "Old Splendid," no doubt a happy nickname for a *grand seigneur*, and on the same analogy, "Old Scent Bottle," exactly conveys the first impression one received from Lord Dufferin, either personally or in correspondence. I can hardly think of any more agreeable *sobriquet* to wear in the historical march-past—most nicknames have a tendency to convey the reverse of an agreeable odour. But I don't think Lord Dufferin would have liked to know he was called Old Scent Bottle: he would have liked to change the epithet, for he was a lady's man

to the last. The wittiest nickname applied to any Ambassador that I have met is also one of the wickedest, "Genial Judas." It is a complete description, and contains the history of many hopes dashed.

Among the occupants of the Paris Chancellery, when I finally made up my mind to leave London, were (Sir) Walter Townley, head of the Chancellery, (Sir) Ronald Graham, now our Ambassador at Rome, and the late Sir Constantine Phipps. Graham and I were (and are) excellent friends, and I was delighted to be one of those to give him a send-off dinner at the Prince's Restaurant upon his appointment to Rome. Many colleagues, including more than one Cabinet Minister, were present, and several were eloquent. But the *clou* of the evening was certainly the Duke of Sutherland's speech. His Grace did a short preliminary canter through the usual commonplace compliments, and then, to the astonishment of many, after a brief reference to Garibaldi and his visit to Stafford House, suddenly produced from his pocket—an old slipper—and waved it round his head, exclaiming: "This is the slipper Garibaldi wore when he was wounded and staying with my grandfather." Englishmen gulped down their emotion, and the many Italians present would have liked to fall upon one another's necks, but aware that they were in London, contrived to look rather less moved than the English.

Of Constantine Phipps, who was afterwards Minister at Brussels, it may be said that he was great at racing and Grand Duchesses. The latter were always coming and going from Paris to Monte Carlo and, I believe, occasionally one even went to Russia, but wherever they were going, it was certain that a faithful little Phipps would be waiting at the Gare de l'Est or at the

Gare de Lyon—as the case might be—with a bouquet. It was thought well to be friends with Russia in those distant days, when a Grand Duchess meant something, and, therefore, the floral activities of Phipps were perhaps not so futile as they may appear.

The sacred cult of the racecourse was held in high honour at the Embassy, and it was understood that those members of the Staff who did not go racing made up for their lack of energy by doing the work of those who did. Graham and I must have consequently covered a good many acres of dispatches of an afternoon. But the work was not very arduous, despite Lord Dufferin's declaration that the hours of the Embassy were exactly twenty-four *per diem*.

When Phipps went to Brussels he was always dashing over to England for some race meeting or other, and I remember his appearing in the Royal Enclosure one Ascot week, and manœuvring himself under the eye of King Edward. "Well Phipps, why aint you at your post?" was all the conversation he enjoyed, for the King, having thus recognized his Minister to Belgium, turned on his heel to converse with somebody else. This remark is paralleled for brevity with another he made at Doncaster, in the Lady's Stand, to a friend who had dared to appear on Leger Day in a bowler hat instead of the orthodox topper: "Hullo Raikes, been ratting?"

We and the French were not on the best terms about Siam at the time I first joined the Embassy, and I remember poor Henry Foley's private letters to me from the Foreign Office used to bear for some time as the rubric of their theme, in the top right-hand corner in his official copperplate, the words: "D——n Siam."

• The name imaginary.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AMBASSADORS AND SARAH

Lords Dufferin and Lytton—Charlie Duff—The Key of the "House"—Prince Demidoff—Conder as Pugilist—The Lord Chief Justice—Sarah Bernhardt—Edmond Rostand—Jean Richepin—Sarah as *débutante*—Stage Craft—Anatole France.

NO one likes and admires the French more than I do and have always done, and I fully expected to find these sentiments reflected in Lord Dufferin. To my great surprise I found that he could hardly express himself at all in French and to put it mildly was not enthusiastic about the nation. For this reason he was quite out of touch with the Parisian point of view, and let me clearly see that he was not enjoying himself in the City of Light. It was a thousand pities that one so endowed with the Graces in the Chesterfieldian sense should have been ignorant of the language in which they are most cultivated. Lord Dufferin, of course, was not a diplomatist by career, and had been given the Embassy at Paris as a fitting crown to a great career. If he had been able to wear it easily, nothing would have suited him better.

Lord Lytton, of whom I used to see something when he was Ambassador to Paris, but on whose Staff I never was, enjoyed his time as Ambassador up to the hilt. He was a good French scholar, and delighted to entertain not only the social and political bigwigs, but also the actors and actresses of the Théâtre Français, Réjane, Sarah Bernhardt and others less known. The garden parties at the Embassy during his regime were

very delightful in the summer, and Lady Lytton has always seemed to me, of the many Ambassadors that I have met, the best representative of the class. She looked and acted the part to perfection. A number of wives of our Ambassadors, on the contrary, seem to regard their position as purely personal, granted to them by a grateful country, because they are such charming people, with the intention that they shall invariably follow the mood of the moment, regardless of their official position. The Ambassadors follow in their train, picking up the social bits and neatly (as far as possible) piecing them together again.

Such a personage was a delightful woman, whom I knew well as the beautiful Mrs. Singleton and gave charming parties in Princes Gate. Eventually she became the wife of Sir Philip Currie of the Foreign Office, and went with him to Rome when he was appointed Ambassador. In addition to the "fatal gift of beauty," she possessed the yet more fatal gift (in an Ambassador) of writing verse. It was not at all bad verse, but her ladyship was certainly not a good Ambassador, though she always remained charming to her personal friends, especially if they also wrote verse. But woe to the unhappy British subject who did not happen to chime with her view of the world or her mood of the moment.

Aubrey Beardsley once described Sir William Watson to me as "the best poet ever made," but I do not recall this compliment to Sir William with a view to lessening the merit of Lady Currie's literary efforts. It is rather with a view of suggesting that an Ambassador can also be made, if she will only take the trouble to remember that Britannia is not Titania—they rhyme though they do not rule together.

Foreign diplomatists have often discussed in my presence such tragic finales to fine careers as those of Sir Edward Thornton, Ambassador in Petersburg (a delightful man), and Lord Dufferin. They say that when our ambassadors retire they (or their wives) always wish to live upon the same scale as when they were in receipt of their full diplomatic salaries. The magnificence of the ambassadorial position has become so dear to them (or their wives) that they cannot dispense with it. They are thus led into entering the City and accepting seats on the boards of directorates, with a view to making up for the difference in income. Everybody knows (or should know) that a knowledge of great political and diplomatic business does not imply capacity for understanding financial affairs in their many intricacies. Poor Lord Dufferin was completely deceived by that clever scoundrel, Whitaker Wright, and the glamour attached to a salary of £10,000 a year was too much for his critical judgment. Various friends became alarmed at the position of the Lake View Consols gold mine, of which he was Chairman, and I remember my uncle telling me that he had uttered a word of friendly warning, but received the reply: "all is well: I never do anything without consulting my solicitor." It has struck me that the much-overdone system of examination, as applied to the Civil Service, might very well be applied in a modified degree to all those claiming to sit upon directorates, or otherwise take charge of other people's financial interests. It should be legally enacted that, before accepting such positions, they should be examined by a joint board of (say) actuaries and stockbrokers, who would begin by testing their capacity to read and understand a few (unseen!) balance sheets and intricate

transactions in stocks and shares. Many would say that this would be degrading to eminent men from other walks in life who wish to spend the autumn of their days gleaning golden harvests in Throgmorton Street. The answer should be : then continue to walk along the path you have trodden successfully—or for heaven's sake sit down and *be quiet* on a more modest income for the few years that remain to you. My friend, the Hon. Charles Lawrence, is chairman of a great railway company, which now proposes to elect no members to the board *over* forty years of age. This is an almost exact reversal of the policy that has hitherto reigned paramount, and I think that there is much to be said in its favour.

As a set-off to the above practical remarks, in which it must be admitted that I do not often indulge, I will refer to a distant connection of my own, the late Charles Duff, brother of Assheton Smith of Veynell, whose clever eccentricities used often to make me smile. I first began to see something of him in Paris, and the acquaintance strengthened by kinship (or clanship), continued in London. Charlie Duff, famous as the owner of Cloister, had other talents besides the Turf. He was an amusing talker, with a distinct talent for caricature, and his work occasionally adorned a page of *Vanity Fair*. He was always up to some wild prank, and I remember receiving a wire from him asking me to come and stay with him at the Clifton, Margate. I ran down for the week-end and found the owner of Cloister extended at full length upon the sand, surrounded by some thousands of trippers and being played and joked *at* by an active band of black-faced minstrels, to whom he negligently pitched an occasional sovereign while returning their personal remarks with

interest. He afterwards stood everyone within reach shrimps and tea, and became the idol of the nurse-maids. He said it was a nice change from London. *De gustibus!*

The same autumn I was sitting in the hall window of the St. James's Club, a favourite perch of mine at that time when in town. Some of the best talk was bandied about to the tune of the tape machine clicking out racing results. Ralph Nevill was buzzing in and out of the card-room, where he always had a card stew brewing in the shape of a share in somebody's hand or a dummy at bridge; Harry Cust was having tea or a substitute for it close by, when to us entered a solemn figure. Yes, it was Charlie Duff, but the laugh had gone out of his grey eyes: we felt that some new and strange event had entered the current of his ill-spent days. He sat down and asked for a drink, which I at once ordered (he was not a member of the Club). When he had refreshed himself, he came out with the joke which had been lying so heavily on his chest. He had stolen something for a joke and now wanted to give it back. We plied him with guesses—was it the Ascot Gold Cup? No (this was reserved for a later expert). Was it the Crown (this had already been done by Colonel Blood), and Charlie Duff was never a plagiarist. It was nothing so splendid, but something, perhaps, almost as important. He had, in fact, stolen the key of the House of Commons. It appeared that he was being shown round the place by Sir William Harcourt, when the sight of the venerable key of the custodians of British freedom had been too great a temptation. He had simply pocketed it while Sir William was blowing his nose in an immense bandana handkerchief, after reciting a complete list of the Speakers of the



House (with dates : I have heard him do the like for the Kings of England). What was to be done with the d—d thing? He had got it with him now. It stuck to him, indeed, like the shirt of Nessus. He had thought of depositing it in the centre of Charlie Jermyingham's table in Montpelier Square, but the latter had vehemently objected, saying that he must either send it back, addressed to Sir William, or leave it for some years sealed up at his Bank.

Cust listened while the tale was poured out. He admired the act, but condemned the cowardice : "Of course you ought to chuck the damned thing into the river," was his final comment.

I never found out what happened to the key : Charlie Duff always turned off the question when asked. This exploit of his recalls that of the Colonel Blood above mentioned, who stole the Crown Jewels in the time of Charles II. I have always thought the latter a most picturesque figure proceeding from the Tower with the Crown under his arm, wrapped up in brown paper, the Orb in his pocket, and using the Sceptre as a sort of impromptu walking-stick. The only difference appears to be that Duff was a rich man, and did it for a joke, while Blood, who was a poor one, meant business.

Little seems left for future men of enterprise in this direction—To steal the key of the Cabinet?—But where is it kept?—In the pocket of the P.M., or on Mrs. George's châtelaine, along with that of the cellar in Downing Street? *Chi lo sa?*

Charlie Duff's brother, Assheton Smith, the millionaire, was not nearly so amusing, but once made an unintentionally funny remark to me when we were sitting near one another at luncheon at the Demidoffs. "I warn you, my dear Ainslie, if you keep baboons,

be careful. They are not good-tempered, and have killed at least one of my keepers." I replied, that having at present only one small room off Piccadilly, I did not think of taking in baboons as boarders.

My dear and excellent Russian and Eton friend, Elim Demidoff, Prince of San Donato (near Florence), our host on that occasion, has had a brilliant diplomatic career. At the time I mention, he was Secretary of the Russian Embassy in London under that kindly and popular personage, the Baron de Stahl. His father and uncle were celebrities on the Continent and had it not been for the war and the collapse of Russia at the red hands of the Bolsheviks, Elim Demidoff would have quite possibly returned to this country as Russian Ambassador. It lay between him and the Secretary of State, Isvolsky. Now he is still in the Russian diplomatic service, Minister at Athens, but, as he says, "Minister from whom, to whom, representing what, I do not know." I think that ups and downs of fortune, those of certain Russian nobles, exceed anything that the rest of the world can show, when one takes in all the splendour of their position at home and abroad. My friend's income from Russia in 1913 amounted to eight millions of francs, about £320,000; in 1914 he was condemned to death and of course in receipt of nothing. "*Doux pays*," as Grosclaude would remark. But he is a poet and a philosopher, as well as a diplomatist, and continues to enjoy life and to continue to do as much good as his restricted means allow. Stendhal, who followed the fortunes of Napoleon, said of his own experiences in life, which were not always agreeable: "One must learn to take a retreat from Russia like a glass of lemonade."

My dear old friend Conder, his wife Stella and I once

returned late from a party at Walter Crane's. We partook of some light refreshment and I left their beautiful house in Chelsea facing Battersea Bridge at about twelve o'clock. As Conder was locking up for the night he heard a noise in the area and saw a burglar disappearing with some of their property over the railings. Although he was the most die-away and evanescent of painters, Conder had muscles of steel, and knew how to use his fists. He bolted after the burglar, and after a brief tussle, knocked him down and fell on the top of him with the intention of sitting on his head until the police came. The burglar, after an ineffective wriggle or two, gave up the game and said: "You 'ave given me the 'ell of a time, governor, the gold watch is in me jacket pocket, it's all I've got that's any good, be a sport, take it and let me go." Conder was at once touched with this tribute to his prowess, and was in the act of rising to comply with his request, when the police did come along and made escape for the burglar impossible.

While the rest of the Chancellery were occupied with "*la haute politique*" and the yet more important "*pari mutuel*," I used occasionally to tread a little primrose path of my own, which did not by any means lead to perdition.

Thus the friendship with Madame Sarah Bernhardt, which had begun at the Hague, was continued while I was in Paris, and I used frequently to slip away to the Boulevard Péreire from the Rue St. Honoré.

Occasionally, however, the Embassy was brightened with an interesting personality such as the late Lord Chief Justice, Russell of Killowen. This portentous personage had come over to sit upon the Behring Sea Arbitration (he sat upon everything and everyone, so

the phrase is strictly accurate). He was altogether *tremendous*, exuberant in vitality, able to put in double the work of ordinary mortals and also double the play by dispensing with sleep, or taking only very small doses of it. Play with him meant chiefly cards, and he ransacked the Chancellery to find boon companions willing to sit up all night over poker when the hard work of the day was done.

The story of his adventure with the subaltern in the Brigade of Guards has always tickled me, so I hand it on for the benefit of those who may chance not to have heard it. He was playing bridge at a house in Mayfair belonging to a fashionable young widow. A move had been made for the card tables soon after dinner, and the Lord Chief Justice had cut for partners a newly joined subaltern in that illustrious and aristocratic body. The evening had been a long disaster for the pair : cards had been bad and the play of the young man even worse. At last the patience of the Lord Chief Justice was exhausted, and he thundered forth his accusations of wrong leads, failure to answer calls, etc., highly spiced with powerful expletives.

The young officer waited until he had finished, and then said quietly : "I'm sorry I played badly, but if you swear at me like that again I shall stop playing and throw the cards in your face ; don't think you can give us any of your *darned Police Court manners here*."

Through Madame Sarah, the best woman talker I ever met, I became acquainted with Edmond Rostand, the poet of *Cyrano*. I remember an amusing supper-party given by the great actress after the performance of Rostand's *Princesse Lointaine* (which I possess with his dedication to me). Among the guests was Sarah's son, Maurice Bernhardt, who married a Roumanian

Bibesco. He was a handsome agreeable man to meet, and adored by his mother, who declared to me that she could refuse him nothing. Rostand and a number of members of the company were also present. I remember Sarah's turning the conversation on to the likenesses to birds and animals to be detected in all human beings. I was seated next to her and asked her (with an internal smile) what animal her son was like, whereupon she quickly replied: "Maurice is the very image of a thoroughbred, 'un cheval de race, mais méchant, très méchant.'" Then her eye began running round the faces of those seated at the supper table and stopped at a little actress with large blue, rather prominent eyes, an aquiline nose and a big mouth. "Tenez!" she said; "voilà Mademoiselle X qui ressemble exactment à une petite merle au nid, le bec ouvert attendant que sa mère y laisse tomber un ver." And sure enough the little lady *did* look just like a little fledgling thrush waiting to be fed in its nest with wide-open beak.

After hitting off a few others to a T, she stopped at Rostand, who was in dress-clothes and therefore black and white with pale face, dark hair, wide forehead and bald head: "Et toi, Rostand, tu ressembles exactement à un de ces singes blancs et noirs que l'on voit au Jardin d'Acclimatation." Rostand did not like this comparison of himself to a black and white monkey, which he seemed to take quite seriously, but he was too much the courtier of the great actress to react violently, contenting himself with a deprecatory gesture and the phantom of a smile. After hitting off a few others between wind and water, Sarah turned to me and said *à brûle-pourpoint*: "Et moi, dis, mon ami, à quoi je ressemble?" Her wonderful mane of tawny

gold hair was flowing that night in an ultra leonine way, so I risked the compliment and declared for a lioness: "Yes, divine one, your earthly semblance is exactly that of a lioness." "Tu te trompes complètement," she cried out, and pointing to Sarita, one of her *suite* who sat near, declared: "*There* is your likeness to a lioness, but *I* am exactly *a goat*, both in looks and in character. Like a goat I love to climb to the summit of the steepest peak and to look down from there upon the rest of the world at my feet." Curiously enough, Sarah at that time did closely resemble a goat seen in profile, with her long face and the position of the eyes, the eyebrows and the hair.

That was a wonderful evening when Sarah was at the top of her form and Rostand, who could talk splendidly when the mood was on him, chiming in with stimulating memories and a little cayenne. I remember asking her what she really thought of Victorien Sardou, who had written so much for her in early days. She said he was a wonderfully interesting talker, but in theatrical matters "un pion de campagne," a country school-master. She mimicked his "J'ai votre affaire." She liked Catulle Mendès personally as a good friend, but disapproved of much of his writing, such as *Méphistophéla*, which had lately appeared. Rostand told me afterwards that she was quite likely to take an opposite view of his literature when next he was discussed. Among the others present that evening was a Monsieur Morand, to whom she was attached at the time. He was a poet and joint author of *Izeyl* with Armand Sylvestre. The curious resemblance of all the especial favourites of Sarah was pointed out to me by Rostand: all had black beards and brown hair. He mentioned, among others, Jean Richepin, the poet, and

Damalas. Of Morand the poet, Rostand remarked that she no longer cared for him, but kept him on in order not to hurt his feelings, and because it looked well to have some sort of poet permanently at one's feet. Roche, the journalist, he said, had wept because Sarah had told him he bored her. He was present on that occasion, and Rostand remarked: "Là où il y a Sarah il y a toujours une Roche." We all laughed at Roche. He did not seem to mind so long as he was "in the picture."

Of Richepin the story used to go that he fell head and ears over in love with that explosion in the darkness that was Sarah, deserting wife and family to follow her footsteps all over the fair land of France. Thus they toured from town to town and province to province, treading the tops of the bouquets of admiration and of art, the brain of the poet and the art of his interpreter. At last they returned to Paris, and for the first time since he had deserted his domicile in the Quartier, the poet bethought him of his little wife and two children. It was certainly odd that she should not have written or made any attempt to get in touch with him, although he well knew that she was devoted to the very ground he trod. At last, one day, he decided to go and see what had happened. He arrived at the hour of the second *déjeuner*, when he knew that his wife and children would probably be just sitting down to that meal. His nerves were strung up in anticipation of a passionate scene of reproaches as he rang the bell. When the maid opened the door and saw who it was, she said that Madame had just sat down, and the truant poet, putting as bold a face as he could upon it, entered the dining-room, where he saw his wife with a child on either side of her. "Tiens,

Jean, tu es revenu" was all she said, rising to kiss him welcome back. He sat through the meal anticipating the inevitable scene when they were alone together. But there *was* no scene—result: the poet never left the family hearth again. That is what I call a clever woman.

To sup every night with Sarah would have been like attending an orchestral concert every night: too much orchestration. When Sarah begins to conceive an interest in the conversation she elevates her voice, and slightly swaying her wonderful head, throws an indescribable *élan*, a conviction that carries the day. She can do anything she likes with accent and intonation. I remember some year or so before the occasion of the party at Paris on which I have dwelt as typical of many, that I was talking with Sarah in her *loge* just before the curtain rose on the last act of *Fédora*. The call-boy had tapped twice on the door, and at last she rose, laughing with the voice of gold: "Et maintenant je m'en vais mourir," she said, extending a jewelled hand to be kissed. I hastened round to the front to see the death-scene, and was really astonished at the intensity of the realism she threw into the death that she had died on the stage so many hundreds of times. One felt every time that *this* was the supreme occasion: *that* was her genius.

My dear old friend and relative on my mother's side, Mr. G. H. Stephenson, was a lifelong admirer of Sarah, and I remember his describing her first appearance as a *débutante* in François Coppée's one-act play *Le Passant*. The whole atmosphere of the theatre, he said, seemed to change when she first spoke: it was like the discovery of electricity. Poetry in her mouth



was like oil and flame. To the end, he who had often seen Rachel, declared to me that there was no comparison possible with Sarah. Rachel, the *tragédienne*, was immensely great, but with a far narrower range, but Sarah was as unapproachable in *Phèdre* as in *La Dame aux Camélias*.

Every poet Sarah touched turned to gold. Richépin and Rostand were but two of the distinguished throng. She had the genius of kindling the genius of others. Rostand is of course not a great poet or a subtle poet, but his work is admirably suited to the stage, and this knowledge of stage technique he owed entirely to Sarah, who stood at his side to guide his steps from the start. Of course she had discerned his brilliant and indeed obvious talent or she would not have taken the trouble, yet the fact remains that had Sarah not been there Rostand might have written for years unnoticed, instead of springing into celebrity in a single first night. Sarah had reserved me a stall for the first night of *Cyrano*, but it had not reached me the day before, so I sent a note to inquire. In reply I received a telegram of forty words explaining that the ticket had been stolen—"on t'a volé ton billet"—and that it could not be recovered at any price. I have kept the telegram as a theatrical curiosity. After *Cyrano*, Rostand continued to shine. When he came over to London with his charming wife I took them everywhere. He spoke no English and was depressed by that heavy atmosphere of the Metropolis, so noticeable when one returns from the other side of the Channel. "Pourquoi si triste, cher Edmond," she used to say, and we would take him off to lunch and be cheered up at the Savoy. He was apt to sit silent for long periods, musing over his rhymes, which were at times *abracadabrantic*.

I remember Sarah using a wonderful verb in describing the impression upon her of the *Princesse Loontaine*: she said: "Cela m'a *extraordiné*." I used to repeat Tennyson, Swinburne, and other poets to Rostand, but he did not know enough English to enjoy them, and therein was a good deal more frank than Paul Bourget with his commonplace praise of writers whom he does not read in the original.

To finish with Rostand, whose son I am glad to see has been successful with a play on an English theme, I may recount the ultra-Parisian anecdote of the actor who was playing the lead in one of Rostand's comedies and much in love with the leading lady. All went well for a time, but at last the actor discovered a waning of affection for himself, and traced it to the attentions of the author's son. He was furious, and after a futile attempt to win back her affections with vituperation, betook himself *to the father* (impossible with us!) to complain that as leading man in the latter's play it was contrary to all precedent that he should be cut out by a whipper-snapper like the author's son. Edmond Rostand listened until the actor had finished his harangue and then turned upon him with a harangue in reply, equally polished and equally to the point, in which he told Guitry that at his age he had no business to make love to the leading lady and that it served him right if he had been cut out by a younger man—whether it were his son or not made no difference.

I used occasionally to meet the eminent critic, Laroumet, at Madame Armand de Caillavet's, and it was there that I also met Monsieur Anatole France, whose acquaintance I wish that I had cultivated more. Madame Armand had a great cult for him, and used to

show me his manuscripts exquisitely bound and some of them illuminated. Laroumet was a good and keen talker, and to him Rostand always appealed when it was a question of asserting his own poetic merit. Laroumet had the highest opinion of Rostand and his works. The story goes that on one occasion they were dining together at a restaurant on the boulevard, when Rostand inadvertently allowed the glowing end of his cigar to burn a large hole in the table-cloth. "What am I to do?" inquired the alarmed poet and friend. "C'est bien simple," replied Laroumet: "signez le trou." The hole was duly signed and the table-cloth preserved for the admiration of future generations.

For some years, thanks to Suzanne Reichenberg, I had the *entrée* to the Salon des Artistes at the Théâtre Français, and there I saw most of the literary and artistic celebrities of the day. We have no Green Room in any London theatre approaching the Salon des Artistes at the Comédie, and it was really an education to hear the conversation of such jovial raconteurs as François Coppée, Mendès, Becque, and many others who came and went during the performances. Coppée had a mania for looking at himself in the glass, and I remember that was how I first realized that he was the poet of *Le Passant*, for I was passing the time of day to Lord Lytton (a faithful frequenter) when he remarked to me: "I wonder what Coppée can find to admire in his countenance like a cooked tomato—however, he has all the other good qualities *cuits à point*."

## CHAPTER XIV

### HENRY JAMES AND OTHERS

Cigarettes—Lady Grant Duff and the Tiny Ghost—Books are Talks—Gladstone Garrulous—Best Stories Lost—Henry James—His "First Night"—"Author! Author"!—Plucked Plumes—A Determined Talker.

LORD LYTTON'S own *tic* was the smoking of cigarettes. His valet used to awake him in the morning at eight o'clock by striking a match and declaring the hour: "Eight o'clock, my lord." From that time until he sought a late lunch a cigarette was never out of his mouth. Even during meals he was sure to produce one after the fish. That he lived to a good old age is a credential for cigarette smoking; but he must have had a wonderful constitution to have withstood it.

Lord Lytton rather lived than wrote poetry, though his verse writings were numerous. His whole career was a romance from his appointment by Dizzy to be Viceroy of India from mere Secretary of Legation that he was; everything seemed to turn to the ideal of human endeavour. He was an old man when he went to Paris, but the best intellect of France soon realized that in him they had, for once in a hundred, an ambassador able to appreciate and to do honour to the French genius. The reason why Lord Lytton's parties were so much more entertaining than the usual diplomatic parties was just that he invited a leaven of interesting people from all careers, instead of limiting himself to the stodgy but magnificent Faubourg, the two houses of equally stodgy but less

magnificent representations and the crowd of esurient and critical *chers collègues*.

My uncle Grant Duff used to rent Lord Lytton's place Knebworth during his absence abroad, and it was there that my aunt had one of three unexplained psychical experiences, which I hope to describe in another volume. Here I have space only for the briefest of the three narratives.

My aunt was born of a family and at a period when it was believed that "hardening" was good for the young. This disastrous notion applied to a person of remarkable recuperative powers and high intellect, such as my aunt, does less harm than in the vast majority of cases, where it may often prove fatal to the weak and ultra sensitive. That is my opinion, endorsed, I believe, by a large number of people to-day, who are on the other hand by no means advocates of excessive leniency and enervating solicitude for children.

Be this as it may, the little girl in question was informed one evening that she would have to sleep that night in the "haunted" room. She was not even told *what* haunted the room, but was locked in at bedtime with the Holy Bible, on which to rest her head when she slept. Nothing occurred in the little dark narrow room with its white cot and one small window overlooking gaunt acres of park. She undressed, lay down and eventually cried herself to sleep. She awoke with a start. She had been crying as she lay there feverishly tossing her little hands on the coverlet, but now *someone else* was crying too, someone standing close to her bed in the darkness. She was at first terrified, but suddenly all fear left her: she had recognized by the sound that the crying was that of *another child like herself*, only far

more miserable than ever she had been. At last she summoned up courage to speak: "Why are you crying?" she asked. There was no reply, but the crying went on as before. Suddenly she felt something icy cold touch her hand: it was another hand, the hand of a child. The crying ceased, and the invisible little hand rested upon hers as though it felt comfort there. She fell into a tranquil sleep and was still sleeping when they came to wake her. She afterwards heard that a small girl had been starved to death in that room two hundred years ago.

The above little story interests me much, as it is first hand for me, though not for my readers. I guarantee its authenticity.

Perhaps some of them will hear for the first time the *shortest ghost story in the world*, of which, on the contrary, I do not guarantee the authenticity, although told me by a Jesuit priest; but I look upon it as highly probable. Here it is: "A lady awoke from sleep feeling frightened: it was pitch dark: she was about to reach out for the matchbox, but before she could do so *the box was placed in her hand.*"

That is all, but I think sufficiently appalling to go on with until I tell the shortest but one.

I have apparently wandered far from the Embassy in recounting these tales, but my object now, as it was then, is to wander as far as possible rather than initiate the bored reader into the dreary routine of drafting and docketing despatches. I remember many years ago going over the Library of the Foreign Office with a high official. He showed me the official seals, to which he attached great importance, but the books and the library were evidently only of interest to him as ancillary to the work of the

office. Even at that time I had come to the conclusion of Maurice Barrès, that events are only interesting when they have ceased to be actual and have become matters of speculation. The official in question was incarnate red tape, but could tell a good official story: one heard the crackle of dry parchment as he turned the page of conversation. His power was once greater than that of any ambassador. With the use of telegraph and telephone the palmy days of diplomacy are gone by. No ambassador can now inaugurate a policy, because he has not *time* to commit his country to a line of policy before he is corrected from the Foreign Office. Lovers of the sense of power in the career should, in my view, always apply for far Eastern posts, because the prestige of diplomatists grows inversely with their proximity to the Foreign Office.

Conversation within the limits of the protocol has always seemed to me an angel with shackles on its wings. That is why I have always sought it afield in the byways and coppices of life and literature or in the closed gardens where the pheasants walk and show their plumes to the sun. Has anyone bettered Maupassant's definition of the art as that of "never seeming wearisome, of knowing how to say everything interestingly, of pleasing with no matter what, of fascinating with nothing at all." A book is a conversation with an echo that adds something to what has just been said, and laughs at every joke. The appalling responsibility of writing a book, such as this, is perhaps lessened when one confesses that the idea of talking for three hundred pages would never have entered the writer's head of itself, but like the matchbox in the ghost story, was placed in it by an unknown power.

The other form of conversation, where there is someone in flesh and blood to reply and to toss the shuttlecock just out of easy reach so that one must run in order to return it, that is the real thing. Conversation is a delicate art unknown to the Grand Panjandrums, of whom one has heard from boyhood upwards.

Such a personage as Gladstone, for instance, would get up a subject like Chinese Music, and begin talking by perfunctorily inquiring of the hapless lady, his neighbour at dinner, what she knew of the subject. This most inartistic of our demagogues, I have it upon good authority, was an intolerable usurper of the rights of his fellow-diners in this connection, and would hold forth by the half-hour upon a subject that very likely interested nobody present, and even if it had, that somebody was supposed to interpolate no remark that did not chime with the "grand" old man's. "No one ever contradicts Mr. Gladstone," his wife remarked on more than one occasion to young paladins who, greatly daring, wished to turn a monologue into a talk. I never had the misfortune to face Gladstone at the tea-table, though on a good many occasions it was my fate to hear the Right Hon. George Russell, who had been his secretary, hold forth in what I suppose was the traditional Gladstonian manner. I gave him short shrift, however, and when he had told me for the third time that his grandam was a Byron, repelled the fourth attack with the remark that if it was a question of asserting she was my "grandam" also.

Anecdotes well told, on the contrary, are, and always have been, a pure joy. One of the best performers in this difficult and dangerous craft was the uncle so often mentioned in these pages, the diarist and statesman,



Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff. He always handled his material adroitly, helped by his unerring memory. He never bored. I have heard him start one long historical anecdote after another and watched the eagerly attentive expression on the faces of those within reach of his rather low voice. I asked him for his formula and he said it was: "Always tell a story in exactly the same words." Many of his best stories have been lost to posterity, for they did not appear in the *Diaries* lest they should hurt the feelings of anyone living. His generation has now almost disappeared and one of my chief regrets is that I did not beg of him to leave a volume of these to be published twenty or thirty years after his death.

Another secret of good talk is the power of stimulating the thought of others while developing one's own. To listen rightly—that is the important thing—the extraction from the quartz of one's interlocutor of the gold that he has not noticed adhering to it. It adds greatly to the interest and stimulates him if it is a bit of his unnoticed gold that you have taken and used for your repartee. Such a talker was Charles Brookfield, who, however, was always ready to slice his opponent's nose if given a chance, and such another was Gilbert. With both I have talked at one of my clubs. The latter had an artful way of luring the unwary into verbal pitfalls which he had previously planted with sharp stakes. Brilliant as they were, neither could be trusted with the bottom off the foil. Both were too fond of making the crimson trickle. But despite this *practical* fault in what should be an *artistic* performance, I would not have missed hearing them for worlds. None of us could feel bored, because if the attention were allowed to wander the individual in question was sure to be pinked.

In direct contrast to these cut-and-thrusters was dear old Henry James, best of men and worst of dramatists. He used to go about the great business of talking in a more subtle but not less effective manner. This manner might be described as *determined hesitation*. It was absolutely fatal to interrupt James, even with the most appropriate vocable. That simply meant the resumption of the entire narrative from the beginning with the suggested word resolutely excluded. I shall never, for instance, forget meeting him in the callow days of our friendship upon the bridge of the Rialto at Venice. We neither of us had an umbrella and the sky looked decidedly threatening. James placed his hand upon my shoulder, remarked that we had both sallied forth to the fray, modern Paladins unarmed—with—here he paused and began fumbling as usual for a word. Meanwhile several heavy drops fell, and I became anxious to get under cover, so I very imprudently hazarded the fatal word—umbrella. The mischief was done; his grasp upon my shoulder tightened as he frowned, not in anger, but in the mental effort to find an alternative word. His brow was wrinkled with thought, he tapped the pavement with his toe as the heavy drops tapped our bowlers. Escape was hopeless before an eminent American novelist (he was not yet naturalized British) in the throes of composition. He looked up the canal anxiously; then he looked equally anxiously down the canal, emitting the while strange little gurgling sounds in his throat, which connoted the throttling of crowds of harmless, excellent vocables, only too anxious to be of service. It began to pour and I felt so desperate that I wrenched myself free with the unfeeling remark: "Well, it's an umbrella that I want at any rate." I left dear James gazing

after me as the raindrops tricked from the tip of his hat on to his nose. He was still seeking the correct word (other than umbrella) when I turned the corner of the bridge.

We met at luncheon a little later in the hospitable Palazzo of Mrs. Bronson, a delightful American lady who used to entertain a good deal at Venice.

I have often wondered how long he did stand there in the rain before the right substitute occurred to him. By rights he should be there now, but even James liked his luncheon. I believe I might have inquired with perfect safety, for James was great-hearted, and quite incapable of bearing malice for the unkindest of thrusts.

For years I used often to meet him in Society, which like many others he verbally detested and really loved. He generally sidled up with some quaint remark, some ultra-recondite joke about someone present. In his last years it was roses, roses almost all the way for him I am glad to say, but like lesser men—and better dramatists—he had his bad quarters of an hour.

I shall never forget, for instance, his inviting me to his box on the occasion of the first performance of a play of his at the St. James's Theatre. The play, adapted from a tale of his own, was singularly undramatic. A 'delicate psychological web,' verbally unwound by his deft fingers from the skein in which he had originally wound it. But the coarse glare of the footlights and the clumsy-fisted players kept breaking and tearing the dialogue at every point. The audience became impatient, or at least a section of it, for of course the author had his friends in the house, and I remember my friend, Edith Lady Allandale, applauding vigorously with me and others in our box. During the first two acts there were a

few rude remarks from pit and gallery, but by the time the last act was reached the tone was distinctly unfriendly. George Alexander leased the theatre and produced the play in which he had a leading part, and he was, of course, included in this censure, as the actors must always be associated with a theatrical failure as they are with a theatrical success. I could see that this failure angered him by the workings of his mouth while on the stage, but I was not prepared for what was to follow. At the fall of the curtain there were plenty of cat-calls and hisses countered to some extent with vigorous applause from our box and from certain friendly parts of the house. James had made one or two brief appearances in the box, but had disappeared during the last act, and I did not know if he were in the house. Certain rather injudicious friends cried: "Author! Author!" To our surprise, James took the call, encouraged also perhaps by our friendly applause, and stood there alone, bowing in the middle of the stage, armed, no doubt, with an arsenal of subtleties to be let loose upon an audience of unappreciative first-nighters. As we know who have studied him and his works, Jamesian witticisms depend upon at least a hundred yards of time-fuse before there is the least chance of the tiniest coruscation. There he stood, apparently hypnotized by the uproar for which his appearance had been the signal, mumbling and bowing away before the curtain. I longed to leap on to the stage and lead him off.

At last he seemed to have reached a dim apprehension of the fact that he was not being universally applauded, and looking round at the boxes where were his friends, in a bemused sort of way, he at length did make up his mind to retire.

Surprises were not over for the evening, however, for hardly had the excellent James disappeared when Alexander took his place before the curtain. His temper was evidently no better, and the heavy jowl worked ominously.

I forget the actual words he used, but the gist of his remarks was that if the play had failed to please, then it was by no means the actors who were to be blamed, but solely the author. He washed his hands of the whole matter.

I well remember gasping as I heard him and feeling that for his sake I did not know which way to look.

James certainly suffered severely that evening and I was always careful to avoid the subject, though I now rather regret that I failed to obtain his opinion of Alexander.

He was a steady friend, and I used to see him from time to time at the Athenæum up to nearly the end. I had begun to publish my versions of the *Æsthetic* and *Practical* Philosophy of Benedetto Croce about this time, when he glided up to me one day and sententiously laying a gentle hand upon my shoulder began : " What is this, my dear friend, are you really abandoning us who dwell—however humbly—be it well understood—upon the—er—yes—slopes of Parnassus—in order to—er—er—er—yes—walk with the—er—yes—Stoics in the—er—Portico? "

I replied (to my astonishment he appeared on this occasion to await a reply), that I had no intention of deserting my hovel upon the said slope, erected in the vicinity of his palace ; that between Parnassus and the Portico was a Bridge of Ivory which those who cultivated poetry and philosophy daily and nightly crossed.

Smiling, dear James opened his mouth, evidently about to develop a counter-thesis of some sort—fitting up my hovel perhaps with a few plumes plucked from the *Wings of the Dove*, when one who shall be nameless, but remain unblessed, came to interrupt us with some futile and wholly reasonable remark. This was almost the last time I saw him, looking strangely like an actor to those accustomed to the hair upon his face—he clean shaved in the last years of his life.

This delightful musér aloud could not be called a conversationalist, though he disliked musing long in solitude, even at Rye in that delightful house where my friend E. F. Benson now lives retired from the world. James was indeed a failure as a recluse. I recollect that one of his finest monologues after his establishment at Rye and rapid return thence to the Metropolis dealt with his misfortune in being dragged away from his studies and his solitude to attend the luncheon party of some pushing Duchess. I knew that he would not have missed it for the world, and I felt that he felt he had not convinced me, for his insistence upon his devotion to the ascetic life filled up quite twenty minutes of my time, pleasantly enough it is true. He tore himself away—to go to the party in question.

On another occasion I remember I had again been lunching with him in De Vere Gardens, and we had reached the coffee stage when the name of Mr. Francis Turner Palgrave was announced as waiting in the hall.

James for the first time ceased talking, rose and placed his hand upon my shoulder with that gesture of apprehension so common to him.

“My dear boy,” he said, “our—er—delightful chat—our—free interchange of—er views—upon—yes I suppose I may say so—er—the most vital literary

questions of the—er—day—is—I—greatly regret—er—to say—at an end : the greatest bore in London is coming upstairs. We shall—er—neither of us—er—get—a word in—er—henceforward—(I smiled sympathetically). Don't go—please—indeed—I beg of you—er—to stay and have—er—pity upon me—but I seize this—er—opportunity to say—er—good-bye—for there will—certainly—not be—er—another opportunity.”

Before I had time to make my first remark since we had sat down to luncheon, the voice of Mr. Francis Turner Palgrave was heard resounding as he removed his hat in the hall. James was right, he was a great speaker, ever vocal, and as he entered the room gripped the conversation with a hold which never relaxed during his visit. He held on steadily, despite James's attempts to break through, in response to the cordial Palgravian greeting that was extended to him. Palgrave's really fine oration lasted a little under an hour, during which he touched upon all subjects that could conceivably interest anybody, and proved that all were dull.

His method was masterly : it consisted in the use of the *refrain*. These refrains, selected from among the last five or six remarks that he made, were, of course, frequently varied. They were used as a sort of dam to block the current of any possibly invading speech. It was thus rendered almost impossible for anyone to break through while Mr. Palgrave was selecting his next theme from his Golden Treasury talk so widely different from the other. Another powerful ingredient was that all he said was sensible, deplorably so in fact, for it led his hearers to make silent vows to loathe and detest those very views for ever and ever.

James was always happiest, like many another less eminent person, when quite certain that whatever he said would be received with admiring sympathy, and above all, inexhaustible patience, while he was fumbling about in his memory for what he believed to be the ideal word. Very often that which he selected would be so remote from the context that one had to think of what James must have rejected in his pursuit of the exquisite and exotic, in order to be quite sure as to what he had really meant to say.

Dear James ! Peace to his ashes. I shall always miss him and his gentle art of hesitation, of which he made great literature.



## CHAPTER XV

### CROCE, BAUDELAIRE, AND OTHERS

Salons—Waiting Her Chance—Benedetto Croce—William Poel—Bernard Shaw—Aubrey Beardsley—Baudelaire—Maurice Barrès—Victor Hugo—Marcel Proust—Casanova—Ernest Renan.

SALONS have been tried over and over again in London, but they have never been really successful. What is the reason? Simply because London is not Paris. One has merely got to observe a knot of Frenchmen discoursing at a café or in a club to see something at any rate of the *machinery* that is behind a salon. The art of speaking well is *taught* to children of both sexes in Paris and is not taught in London. English people would not tolerate it. Although we are the *most* governed and the *least* free country in the world, the touching myth is still clung to by millions that we are free. We are free to the extent of being free to be silent, and a Frenchman once defined conversation with an Englishman as—silence. Plenty of English people make no effort to join in conversation, much less to be entertaining. That is practically unheard of in France, where it would be looked upon as bad taste not to exert oneself while in the society of others.

In Paris the rapidity of conversation at parties is often vertiginous, and it is difficult enough to follow, much less to make a contribution, when people are screaming jokes at one another from opposite ends of the table. I remember being seated next to a charming little

lady at such an entertainment. Shrieks of laughter were echoing all over the room, people were capping one another's "impossible" jokes with others yet more perpendicular, but my small friend sat still and wistful. She was *waiting her opportunity*. Suddenly she plunged into the fray, almost shrieking out a witticism, which was immediately caught up and applauded in the midst of the torrent. Then she turned to me with a sweet, satisfied smile and said: "Enfin, j'ai réussi à placer mon mot—maintenant causons." Having succeeded in her ambition she was content; she had been recognized—she had placed her joke.

But we did not long converse: soon she was again trying to "place" a witticism, and indeed in Paris it would be looked upon as bad manners to be occupied exclusively with one's neighbour, however much one might be devoted to her.

Conversation as a fine art is almost exclusively confined to the Latin countries: in Italy it is even more dramatic than at Paris.

I have dealt elsewhere with my first meeting with Benedetto Croce, the philosopher of Naples. But here I may legitimately refer to the excellent quality of the talk that I have enjoyed at his house and also in the streets of Parthenope, as Naples used to be called, after a fabulous marine goddess or nymph. Conversations begun within doors and carried on by a round dozen of friends and acquaintances accustomed to dodging the traffic while keeping tight hold of the argument.

Listen to that tall, dark, deep-eyed, swarthy complexioned man if you are fortunate enough to be within earshot and, for the moment, safe upon the pavement. He is enclosing the entire universe in that

sweep of the arm: that is Giovanni Gentile, the philosopher of Palermo and now of Rome, maintaining the absolute immanence of the Spirit in the Universe, without differentiation of any activities. His opponent, shorter in stature, with the fine, white, delicate hands of the artist and that wonderful pair of piercing gray eyes in a massive head is the celebrated Benedetto Croce, who replies with an equally energetic gesture that the world we live in would be inexplicable if that were so and that the true division is fourfold—æsthetic, logic—but we have been almost run over by a frantic *carrozza* while contemplating these eminent men, who seem to be immune to dangers from the traffic to which they are so well acquainted. See another brilliant thinker in my excellent young friend, Di Ruggiero, who dashes across the road to join them and probably to support Gentile; but Croce is a master of dialectic and may well be trusted to defend himself against the two of them.

Let us drop behind for a moment and join another interesting and fascinating person in Di Giacomo, the dialect poet and dramatist of Naples, celebrated now throughout the peninsula, entirely thanks to Croce, who is Dantean in his power of creating reputations with a few words. Di Giacomo had an article dedicated to him in the *Critica* and sprung at once into fame. He is a delightful companion, and once we paid a visit to Rome together. His eyes are dark-brown, dangerously alert and understanding. He is rather bulky in build, but by no means unwieldy. He is not a young man now and his success has inspired many other dialect poets. His little dramatic pieces deserve attention: but they are difficult to follow, being all written in the dialect of Naples, which widely differs

from Italian spoken elsewhere. He tells me that inspiration always comes to him in the dialect form, though he speaks Italian perfectly and is in charge of the Ludovisi-Palla Library. He told me that when we reached Rome he felt just like a foreigner arriving in a strange land. Di Giacomo is also a great authority on the eighteenth century, which has not for him ceased to exist—Casanova is still escaping from the Piombi Prison at Venice and they still wear masks on the Grand Canal.

In my wanderings, I have met men and women of many centuries besides the nineteenth and twentieth. Certainly Di Giacomo is a Neapolitan of the eighteenth century. With us there was Aubrey Beardsley, who also belonged to that period in France, though with his genius he reached out into the future and has influenced black and white work more than any other artist of our time.

The most perfect sixteenth-century type we have among us in England is my good and great friend, William Poel, who might have stepped straight from a canvas by Holbein into the nineteenth century. His work as the advocate of Shakespeare, to be acted as he himself intended to be acted and in obtaining a pure text of our great national poet, is so well known that I shall not touch upon it here. I hope we may sit for many more years upon the Council of the London Shakespeare League together, to the confusion of the merely commercial Stage. Mr. Poel's real name is Pole, like the sixteenth-century Cardinal's, and his reason for changing it as quaint and original as his reasons for doing most things. As a boy he left home surreptitiously—to join the stage—and did not dare to flaunt the paternal patronymic behind the footlights

in those benighted days. He is an altogether delightful talker and lecturer. With him the colloquial element enters almost as much into the lecture as into ordinary conversation. The fact is that he knows his own subject so perfectly, the England of the time of Shakespeare, that it simply exudes from him without apparent effort of any sort. His long, rather ascetic face and brilliant brave hazel eyes are well known to artistic audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. His delivery is sometimes very rapid, and his whole face flashes up with excitement when debating some vital point. He has many notes and stops in his voice, and achieves exquisite modulations in repeating Shakespeare. He has a naïve and aimable socialism of his own, which he carries out to the letter. He told me for instance then, when last he went over to Pittsburg to lecture, the remuneration was excellent, but the art students of the city wished to present him, in addition, with a pair of silver candlesticks on the day of his departure. This was done with great pomp and ceremony, the hall being crowded with admirers and subscribers. Anybody else would have accepted the beautiful candlesticks with an appropriate little speech of thanks, but not so William Poel. On the contrary, he refused them very politely, saying that he had already been extremely well paid for his lectures and could not think of carrying anything away from Pittsburg to which he was not really entitled !

William Poel is an original thinker on theatrical subjects, and only the other day Mr. Bernard Shaw had the grace to admit on the platform that "we have all plundered William Poel." When he began to make his name known, to become a power on the stage, the managers thought it would be well to rope him in and muzzle him. They therefore invited

him to a private meeting, at which were present George Alexander, Beerbohm Tree, George Edwardes and a dozen other leading managers. They expounded their views as to how things ought to be and would be done. Poel heard them to the end, and then said that he totally disagreed with their methods and their aims, and must refuse to join them in their intentions of preventing the public from having the best work and preventing young dramatists from getting a hearing, and thereupon walked out of the room. I wish I had been present: their faces must have been a study. I remember the scene when Mr. Poel and the present writer swept the board at the General Meeting of the London Shakespeare League, Sir Henry Brabrooke, the Chairman, resigning and the policy that we are following to-day being adopted by a large majority.

I mentioned Beardsley above as being of the eighteenth century, and that was certainly the impression I had of him during the last period of his life, when we met through the agency of his dear sister Mabel, whom all artistic London loved. He was then living at a small hotel at Dieppe. He used to await my coming in the little gravelled garden of an afternoon, and we sat with coffee cups before us. Our table was placed beneath the shadow of an acacia tree in this garden, and the sounds of the promenade were delightfully dulled and made remote for us by a wall of ivy. With Beardsley entered the eighteenth century. He had a wonderful capacity for creating atmosphere, not only in his art, but in his words and clean-cut, dramatic gestures, with those blazing brown eyes, above them that smoothly-flattened auburn hair and the long, ascetic-looking face, rendered so tragically keen by illness. He was immersed at that time in the reading

of Gautier, and in the illustrative work of Walteau, Fragonard and other French masters of his century. I shared his admiration for Théophile Gautier, the "impeccable" poet, master of prose, and soon we were hard at it in the discussions of the mysterious doings of Rosette in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* and of Mademoiselle herself. Suddenly he produced from his pocket a suite of marvellous pen-and-ink drawings of Mademoiselle de Maupin. I can see him now producing them, with a rapid circular glance to make sure that we were undisturbed. The great adventuress, in one of these drawings, sits at her toilet-table in Venice, upon which are placed four candlesticks. She looks too wonderful for words, and is in the act of adding just a suspicion of additional *belletto* to the carmine already upon her cheeks. "The nearest I have ever been able to get to a beautiful woman," whispers Beardsley in his low voice at my elbow, as I admire. Her mask lies beside her, and no doubt there is a masked cavalier in the gondola below ready to carry her, by what mysterious meanderings of canals, to what marvellous revel with other masks as mysterious as she. Longhi with the experience of the years between : a masterpiece in little.

Beardsley's talk was dazzling in the extreme : it was like a sun-glass that concentrates such intense light where focussed that one felt if it remained there long it would set the subject aflame, as indeed it did, and we can study some of the flames in the Books of Drawings. I remember his describing the styles of the above and other masters in a few words which bit like an etching pen into the plate. I was able to tell him some anecdotes about Gautier, which I had recently culled from the monograph about "the perfect magician

of French letters," as Baudelaire described him in a celebrated dedication. These set him off into fits of cheerful laughter, so I followed up with others of the poet of *Fleurs du Mal* dying his hair green and expecting therewith to astonish Auguste Vacquerie. Vacquerie entered and glanced at the hair, but made no comment whatever upon it, plunging at once into a literary discussion. The poet became more and more uneasy, at last blurting out: "But don't you notice anything unfamiliar about me to-day, mon cher Vacquerie?" "No, nothing at all out of the way: I see your hair is now green, but as it is an almost universal fashion to wear it that colour I did not wish to congratulate you upon being commonplace." Baudelaire was furious.

Beardsley now in high fettle rapped out his contribution of alas, unprintable anecdote and reflection like a prince throwing down golden ducats. I searched my memory for another anecdote about Baudelaire and found the following, which made him laugh more consumedly even than before, but his flushed cheeks were a signal that it must be the last. The little incident is, I believe, perfectly true; it reached me in a roundabout way, but has never, I believe, appeared in print even in France. Baudelaire was famous as a mystifier: nothing he enjoyed more than astonishing his admirers—and others, and he would take infinite pains to inveigle his victim. Legends of his making would-be Don Giovannis circumambulate frozen fountains in January by means of letters indited by himself as Dulcinea are numerous, but on this occasion the victim was merely a student of seventeen, who had once met Baudelaire and conceived for him the highest admiration. This very young man was meditatively pursuing his way up the Boulevard Saint-



Michel one afternoon when he saw Baudelaire coming in his direction. His heart beat fast: should he venture to salute the poet? Certainly he would not be remembered, but nevertheless, as they passed one another, off went the youthful hat in a sweep of copious admiration. But, O joy! Could it be for him? Yes, the great man had actually stopped and was advancing with outstretched hand. "My friend" (joy redoubled!), "I wonder if you could do me a great favour: I am in need of money." Astonishment, but like lightning the youth's memory ran over the state of his finances. It was the end of the quarter and he was almost penniless. He found five francs and offered them at once to the poet. "No," said Baudelaire, "that is too much; fifty centimes is all I want: then he whispered: *c'est une histoire de femme*.

Among later writers that I have met in Paris, there is one, Maurice Barrès, who has attained to great celebrity. I suppose few have influenced the generation of Frenchmen now between forty and fifty-five so profoundly as he. His pale, sallow face has rarely been seen in London, though I once heard him lecture at Burlingham House during the war. He has long been a member of the Académie Française. My first meeting with him was at a dinner-party given by Madame Alphonse Daudet. Her vivacious and entertaining son, the well-known deputy journalist and duellist, Léon Daudet, was among the guests and made Barrès tell some of his best stories. We finished the evening (or rather morning), I remember, at Maxime's, having crossed the Seine on foot. Barrès at first reserved, once started was most entertaining and evidently entirely unmoved by the rather excessive merchants of smiles who surrounded us at all the tables.

The din was prodigious, but our conversation continued as if we were still on the tranquil left bank of the river. At Daudet's request, Barrès described his one and only visit to Victor Hugo, as a very young man. Vacquerie had insisted upon it that the author of *Tâches d'encre* should be presented to the poet of the *Légende des Siècles*, so the appointment was made, and they sat awaiting the great man's entrance in the magnificent salon with the red velvet hangings. At last the door was flung open and Victor Hugo entered with hands outstretched in the direction of Barrès, who stood perfectly unmoved at the side of his introducer. "Young man," exclaimed the poet, as he embraced his unmoved guest, "I have read your verses : they are exquisite." "Master," replied Barrès, "I never wrote a verse in my life." Barrès described Hugo as gaping amazedly at him and then finding some banal excuse to disappear. Barrès, in appearance so coldly sinister, has always suggested to me what St. Just must have been when he addressed the Revolutionary Tribunal in favour of adopting the most severe measures. His literary influence now is perhaps not equal to that of Charles Maurras, but is still considerable. In politics he has made less mark, though he represented Nancy for several years and long presided over the "patriotic league."

One more Parisian talker who has lately become prominent and I have done. Marcel Proust, author of *Du côté de chez Schwann* and other fiction without end was quite unknown to fame when I first met him in Paris at his father's, Boulevard Malesherbes. His pale, long face, with deep hollows under the eyes, proclaimed the invalid, and indeed he used not to appear before night-fall even in those early days, alleging (during the

summer at least) that his hay-fever made circulation in the daytime unendurable. His random style, which appears to have no point from which it starts, and no end towards which it proceeds apparently suits the present generation of Society Parisians. I frankly confess that I cannot read him with enjoyment, although I enjoy his conversation, which is rather like that of a man in a pleasant dream who is able to share it with you. His favourite place and moment for unveiling the secrets of his soul are between three and four of the morning, at the conclusion of a party which began at midnight and which one leaves with him, sharing a taxi. He will conduct you to your domicile, say good-bye with a warm hand-clasp and then launch forth into the most amusing characterization (not erring on the side of good-nature) of the people you have been with and incidentally of everybody else in the Tout Paris. He has been compared to Choderlos de Laclos, but I should say that Proust's talent is the exact opposite of the sober and intense author of *Liaisons Dangereuses*. His style is like a feather-bed; Laclos's, like the rapier that rips it.

Of these desultory chats in club windows or in the bow-windows of county-house libraries during a weekend, when several men of different pursuits and a few "odds and ends of wives"—as the late Lord Cromer used to call certain fair ones of Cairene society—are gathered together.

The actual place of the happening matters so little, providing that the ingredients are present, and these consist of the spirit of man—and woman—when set free from the ordinary trammels of convention and money-getting—Paris, London, Rome, Biarritz—or an inn by the wayside in Greece.

Certainly my progresses across Europe in the 'eighties and early 'nineties had much of the quality of the Arabian Nights Entertainment—I was so constantly in the habit of meeting with astonishingly interesting people of all sorts of ages and positions, and each one of these was able to lift the corner of a veil revealing infinite vistas of country unexplored. Casanova is very well in his way, but his eternal pre-occupation with love affairs of a secondary, not to say tertiary order, always seemed to me a narrowing of the possible horizon, an unnecessary restriction of experience. As I have mentioned Casanova, I may here tell a little tale about his posthumous amateness, which was handed precious to me by one who had it on the best authority. It has not before seen the light. The celebrated adventurer died, as is well known, at Dux in Bohemia, and was laid to rest in the churchyard of the little town. Some twenty years after the burial, the space containing graves being entirely covered, another cemetery was chosen, and the old graves became gradually overgrown with rich vegetation, entirely covering slabs and headstones, which had many of them sunk deep into the ground. A right of way was consequently claimed, and scores of feet came trooping and stamping down the already vanishing monuments, but it was noticed that all the pretty girls of the district found their frocks torn when they crossed a certain patch of grass. Examination was made, and it was discovered that they had *all* caught their skirts in the top of Casanova's headstone, which was but just visible above the soil. I suppose this is the most remarkable instance of the "ruling passion strong in death" upon record.

But as I said, Casanova always seemed to me a

trifle narrow—circumscribed, and in my early manhood, I preferred to take my *condottiere* with a little sauce *à la Renan*, which was then fashionable. I had the advantage of meeting the historian-moralist at my uncle's Grant Duff's, though not so far north as he actually once penetrated, namely to Eden, my uncle's lovely estate on the Deveron, in Banffshire, which was afterwards sold to old Lord Fife, already mentioned among the heroes of the *battue*. What the author of the *Vie de Jésus* did there I cannot imagine, but he probably limited himself to quarter-decking the lawn overlooking the river with his host, who was about equally addicted to country pursuits. I remember that the first time I saw him was at the Collège de France, where he was then Professor. Bearing with me my uncle's introduction, I scaled the staircase with fear and trembling, eventually entering the presence of the great Hebraist in a state bordering upon aphasia. He received me with that delicious suavity which seems to have completely vanished out of the world with the advent of democracy, and in reply to my apologies for my French, which (at that early date) was by no means perfect, affirmed that he, too, was ignorant, woefully, absurdly ignorant of England, and would be glad to have a little information upon the subject. Being fairly well grounded in the geography of the British Isles, I plucked up courage at this remark and thought for an instant of providing the aimable old gentleman before me, who kept washing his hands with invisible soap, while he applied the same useful article of the toilet to my very sketchy pronunciation of his exquisite tongue, with a brief statement of the principal manufacturing centres, rivers and sporting estates of

Great Britain, but upon second thoughts and guided by a sort of suppressed twinkle in his benevolent but penetrating eyes, I decided to refrain, and (wisely) limited myself to extolling his works, so far as I was acquainted with them. He agreed with all I said, which certainly encouraged me to proceed, and I ventured upon several rather doubtful assertions, which he did not take the trouble to correct. He sat there like a Buddha, and as long as I was prepared to burn incense, he was ready to inhale it. He had a way of swaying his big head from side to side, and only paused in this in order to remark : "How well said !" Or he would raise his arms in the air as though about to bestow a benediction and then think better of it (or worse of the recipient) and let them fall gently upon his knees. Of course he did not think it worth while to instruct me in the rudiments of comparative philology, but all the same proved himself an excellent and kindly host ; Madame Renan, however, took upon herself to instruct me in the art of making a tomato salad sauce worth a wilderness of emendations.

## CHAPTER XVI

### COACHING AND OTHER CURIOSITIES

Walter Pater and Renan—Sanctuary!—J. A. Cramb—A Magician—An Indian Mystery—I Drive the Coach—Susanne Reichenberg.

PATER and Renan I believe never met, but they had a good deal in common. The one wrote the most perfect English, the other the most perfect French prose of his time. Renan was once a priest and never lost the priestly mode of address; Pater, though never in orders, was of an extremely religious temperament; Renan, as I remarked above, agreed with all that was said and sometimes could hardly refrain from the benediction; Pater adopted a similar method upon many occasions. There must be some living still (apart from his sister, Miss Hester, my dear friend) who have often heard his "I-have-no-doubt-you-are-quite-right," his "Ah! yes," with which he met the onslaughts of uneducated criticism. I gave some of my reminiscences of Pater to my friend, Mr. A. C. Benson, when he was writing his monograph, but the following little details were not included, and so far as I know, have never seen the light. The story is told of him when he was Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, that on one occasion he had the usual share of College examination papers for matriculation to look over and mark at the beginning of term. All the others were sent in, but Pater's not being forthcoming, his fellow-examiners decided to call upon him in

his College rooms. After tapping for some time at his door, they were admitted by Pater himself, pale-faced and ascetic in appearance, and graciously motioned to seats in his library. The table was strewn with Greek, Latin, and Italian texts, and the manuscript of the Renaissance lay in the centre, with the pen beside it. But the Fellows looked in vain for the neatly tied-up bundle of examination papers, which had been duly delivered some days previously by the College "scout." At last one of them ventured to inquire if the papers had been marked by Pater. To their astonishment he replied that he had received no papers so far as he could recollect—he was not even aware that the examination for matriculation was being conducted. They were in despair: the papers were certainly delivered—what was to be done. Suddenly some one had an idea: "Shall we repeat the names of the young men in for the examination? Perhaps that might recall the matter." "Ah! yes, that will be well, very well." Thereupon they started off reading from the list. Pater listened with an absolutely unmoved countenance of paled unrecognition until they reached the name of Sanctuary. "What a beautiful and suggestive name," he remarked. That was all they could elicit from him. The papers were, I believe, eventually discovered reposing upon a chair in the hall, untouched. They had indeed found sanctuary which, so far as Pater was concerned, would never have been violated.

A friend of mine, who used to know Pater, allows me to tell how she used at one time to live almost next to the author of *Marius the Epicurean*, and upon one occasion had the misfortune to faint in the kitchen of her parents' house. The cause of this was the sight of a number of black beetles, and these horrible



creatures ran all over her face while she was lying helpless upon the floor. She was picked up, and soon returned to her senses and to the unsympathetic smiles of the family. Pater happened to be dining with them that evening, and after the family had exhausted their wit in chaffing the poor young lady about her misadventure, Pater drew her quietly aside and said: "I wish to tell you that I have great sympathy with you in your misadventure, the more so as I have myself experienced a like sensation of pullulating horror while contemplating the innumerable stars in the Milky Way." Pater alone was capable of such a phrase.

There was another friend of those days, almost the exact antithesis of Renan and Pater, who used to frequent the society of my dear friend, J. P. Nichol, already described. This was J. A. Cramb, who enjoyed a glimpse of fame as prophet of the Great War, but unfortunately died without receiving his full meed of recognition. Professor of History at Queen's College, Harley Street, where his lectures must have astonished the fair young ladies, his pupils. Cramb was about the last person one would have supposed suitable for such a post, though I have no reason to doubt that he filled it excellently well, overflowing as he was with historical knowledge and possessor of the proverbial golden mouthpiece.

Cramb would burst into the stillness of my room like a tornado overdue, his hair erect upon his head, his long arms asway, his longer legs striding up and down the narrow space as he damned the villainy of the times, the lack of seriousness, the incapacity to look in the face the fact of Germany's immense accretion of power as a direct menace to ourselves. "*Dom* it, Ainslie!" he would say (pronouncing as written),

and thumping the nearest object with a titanic fist, "*Dom* it, we *cannot* and we *must* not go on like this: Roberts is the only man in the country who does not seem to be sound asleep and snoring. Can't we do *something* to wake 'em up?"

What *he* did was to publish his remarkable book, *Origin and Destinies of Imperial Britain*, which received scant or superficial notice in the Press.

At that time it was more fashionable to listen to certain of our Ministers with their stories of Germany's pacific intentions and the villainy of our aristocracy. I can see their faces and hear their tongues wagging against poor old Roberts stumping the country for all he was worth and telling the unwelcome truth.

Cramb, like William Poel, was a man of the sixteenth century. He might quite well have been one of the galaxy that clustered round Shakespeare, Peele or Nash—not Greene, let us hope—Dekker or Marston. For Webster he was not sufficiently sombre, for Cyril Turner not cruel enough. But his language and his behaviour were alike those of a man belonging to another period of history than that through which we are passing.

I met another such while I was in Paris at the Embassy striving variously to sever the monotony of red tape—that lion among magicians, MacGregor Mathers. He practised the black art (which, with him, was never worse than piebald) in the immediate vicinity of the Invalides. Thither to an obscure ground floor I would betake me on a blazing summer afternoon, to find Mathers pouring over the pages of the *Kabbala* with blinds closely drawn to keep out the sun and a dim smoke rising from a crucible in a corner of the room. The *mise en scène* was most effective, enlivened and heightened, as it was, by the presence of Mrs. Mathers,

beautiful as the evening star, herself a magician of no mean powers—some said even more potent than those of the mighty MacGregor himself. Anyhow, it was all very wonderful, and a great relief from the Saharan desert of Siamese affairs, which at that time occupied the attention of Her Majesty's Embassy. My horoscope was, of course, taken, by which it appears certain that Jupiter is in the ascendant and controls my destiny, though a certain goddess of extreme attractiveness has been and always will be apt to take a hand in the game; but considering the part she played in the career of Jupiter himself, this is hardly to be wondered at in the case of a mere mortal. Mathers was a man of the Louis XI period, and, I suppose, he had his reasons for living in the city where that amiable monarch spun his web so successfully. Astrology, I am convinced, is as exact a science as, shall we say, hydraulics, and infinitely more exact than such fantastic guesswork as political economy. I often smile at the seriousness with which serious people vaunt the dogmatic assertions of some John Stuart Mill, as though they were absolute truth, and then drop them like a hot potato when the new man comes along with the new formula. The astrologers have always said: Give us the exact moment of your birth, and we will tell you what and whence you are and will be. I commend my readers to a recent article in that excellent publication, the *Mercure de France*, for exhaustive treatment of astrology on scientific lines.

The fact of the matter is that we know very little indeed as to our origin, and as to the potentialities of our bodies, even in this life. The following curious story was told me a few years ago, at Florence, by an Englishman who had studied the Indian Phil-

osophy and Religion of Yoga. He was travelling in the interior, and on the occasion in question, had his gun in his hand, and came to a deep, rather wide stream in the jungle. Pleased with the quiet beauty of the spot, he thought he would sit down and rest for a while during the hot hours of the day. He had just installed himself comfortably on the bank, after taking the usual precautions against reptiles, when he was conscious of a slight movement among the bamboos on the other side of the river. He remained motionless and was glad he did so, for to his surprise, instead of the wild animal that he expected, he saw a very old man, clad in a single shawl-like garment, with matted hair and eyes that appeared to see nothing, gazing straight before him. He approached the opposite bank and sat down almost facing my friend, who was concealed by the vegetation, yet could see him perfectly. A long time passed, perhaps two, perhaps three hours, during which the old man sat with his eyes fixed upon the stream, apparently in deep contemplation. Suddenly, he made a movement, stretching out a lean long arm to grasp something that was floating down the stream close in to the bank upon which he was sitting. He drew it towards him, and then my friend saw that it was the dead body of a youth, which had thus floated to the feet of the Yogi. A wisp of straw in the mouth signified that he was dead.

The old man drew the body out of water with tender precautions, then, partly carrying, partly dragging it with him, disappeared into the dense jungle. My friend was deeply interested in this act, and anxious to discover what he had done with the youth's body, thus mysteriously *sent down* to him, as it were, upon the stream, and so mysteriously drawn

forth. Unfortunately there was no bridge for some miles in either direction and the stream was deep and broad. He did not care to swim over, as it teemed with crocodiles. So he decided to wait the possible return of the old man after he had buried the corpse and to question him as to his mysterious appointment to meet it on its downward way. For to him it was clear that the Yogi *expected* the corpse. He sat there a long while, until the light began to fade, but the old man did not return, and he felt that it was time to seek his quarters some miles distant. He marked however the place on the bank and the next day at dawn crossed the stream by a bridge further up its course and followed the bank until he came to the spot where the old man had been sitting. Striking into the jungle from this point, he and a friend made a careful examination of the ground, covering every foot of it systematically. About twenty yards from the bank, propped up against a tree trunk, they found the naked dead body of the *old man*. Of the *youth's* naked body they could perceive no trace anywhere, nor of the garment that the old man had worn.

Other tales equally remarkable have reached me at first-hand and I am convinced that in India is knowledge obtained by concentration of thought and possibly other means of a psycho-physical character, which transcends anything of which we in Europe are aware.

Returning to the Paris days, from which I have wandered, in order to return to them with joy renewed, an incident in the memoirs of the Princesse de Talleyrand reminds me of another in my diplomatic career, which has, in common with it, only the fact that both are connected with coaches. My adventure arose one day when I was walking with Count Boutourline and

(Monsieur) Marie de La Hante. Boutourline was very literary, and at the same time much interested in horses, and it appeared that he had arranged for an excursion to St. Germain by coach the following day. The coach had been hired, the party invited, and a magnificent dinner ordered at St. Germain. They were all Frenchmen and Russians, including the Duc de Morny, Vicomte de Breteuil, Brévern de La Gardie of the Russian Embassy, and two or three others. All was thus arranged, and Boutourline had proposed to drive the coach, and consequently have by him, on the box seat, Mademoiselle Reichenberg of the Théâtre Français, who at that time was still playing *ingénue* roles and in full possession of her charm and beauty. But here was the difficulty : none of the others would trust themselves to the tender mercies of Boutourline, and as all had subscribed equally to the evening's amusement, all were equally entitled to a voice in the matter of the driver. Morny suggested that he should take the place of Boutourline, but this was at once howled down by the other Frenchmen present, who preferred, they said, sudden death to the loss of a few limbs in the inevitable collisions with other traffic if the Duc were to be entrusted with the reins. The final discussion, to which we were proceeding when the narrative opened, took place in the establishment of the owner of the coach and horses. Suddenly someone had a new idea : " Let Ainslie drive." I was flabbergasted at this proposal, the more so, as almost at once the various-voiced disputants sank their differences, and agreed to trust their lives—and Mademoiselle Reichenberg—to my skill. I had accepted the invitation, and put up my share of the outing a day or two before, but never anticipated such a climax. The fact of the matter was that I was

about the only one of the party who was not ready and willing to drive, and at the same time the only one the others would trust. A great compliment, not to me, but to the English character (*Anglais* with many foreigners does duty for *British*). Vainly I protested that I had never driven a coach in my life, though I had driven most other vehicles, including the tandem, in which Phillips and I used to toil over to Dover from Folkestone, many years previously. That did not seem to disturb them in the least, and as all were equally determined that no one of their number should drive—and it was considered *infra dig.* to be driven by the coachman—I found myself, to my astonishment, and considerable perplexity, upon the box. The reins were indeed a handful, even after tandem reins, and I had but little time to bestow upon the vision of blue smiles and silk that found her way to my side. *Allons !* and the leaders were let go, springing forward at once over the stones of the courtyard. I determined to be lured to no flights of folly, but to proceed with utmost deliberation, and above all, to remember that the French rule of the road is the opposite to our own. I found that the leaders were rather inclined to pull, so when we got out of the main traffic of Paris, I let them go, more or less, their own pace, though always taking care that it did not break into a gallop. Even so I found, after the first twenty minutes, that my arms were aching as though they were being pulled out of their sockets. I cannot imagine how certain friends of mine persist in driving coaches for their pleasure. Our pace was considerable, and indeed, one of the few remarks that reached me from the vision of beauty on my left, was to the effect that we were “eating up the road.” Boutourline and the others, however, made up for my

silence by shouting remarks to one another and to our one fair lady, which (I afterwards discovered), obtained for me, in her estimation, the useful reputation of a "strong man," or its French equivalent. We arrived in the early afternoon, and wandered about in the forest until seven o'clock. Most of the time I was listening to the outpourings of Pierre Boutourline, as he translated his Russian poems into French for my edification, and that of Mademoiselle Reichenberg. The dinner was a *crescendo* of gaiety, the interest centering, of course, round the lady, and I remember how deeply (and silently) I regretted that I could not cope with the others in their use of the idiom. Our fair guest set us all off into fits of laughter by exactly mimicking the Americans who came to her for lessons in French elocution, and then won our admiration with selections from her repertory as the *ingénue éternelle*. The drive back was a dream. The road was, luckily, almost free of traffic, and the horses seemed to have reconciled themselves to my hands, for they gave no trouble, and I even ventured to lay a humble little verbal tribute like a *bouquet de deux sous* at the feet of our fair companion, who had been pelted all day with such gorgeous flowers of rhetoric. To my great surprise, it was accepted with alacrity, although so slight a thing, and I then learned what I have ever remembered since, that in a competitive examination it is always best to do your best however hopeless the case may seem, without regard to the superiority of the other candidates—especially when the examiner does not wear trousers.

Mademoiselle Susanne Reichenberg used to live in a secluded little blind-street, not far from the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, and thus close to the centre of



things, yet enjoying the quiet of the country. The Villa Saïd has since become celebrated as the residence of Anatole France, one of the best talkers, as he is one of the greatest writers of our day. It is a great advantage, when meeting a distinguished talker, to find him in the company of his peers, who are able to draw him out, so that the burden of starting the game by beating about the bushes does not fall upon the visitor, who may feel justifiably shy of disturbing coverts so closely preserved. France, in his vivid red velvet cap in his own study, is a very different person from France at a reception, defending himself from the vigorous onslaughts of his admirers.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LITERARY AND OTHER LIONS—ITALY

Hippolyte Taine—A Russian Diplomatist—Lessar Among the Lions—A Brave Lady—Not "My Lion"—Revels at Florence—The Rose Garden—Ruth Anderson—Enchanted Ground.

TAINE, whom I first met in a crowd, and afterwards in the quietude of his dwelling in the Rue Cassette, was also a person who gained greatly in being taken apart from his usual environment of avid students and empty-headed people of social position. I remember that what first broke the ice with the historian of French contemporary civilization were my manœuvres with my opera-hat which, as used to be the fashion, I had carried with me into my aunt's drawing-room in Great Stanhope Street. Taine frankly burst out laughing at the ingenuity of Gibus, whose genius was thus revealed to him for the first time, borrowed my hat, put it several times through its collapsible drill and returning it to me said he would purchase one on the morrow and at the same time added an invitation to visit him in Paris. It was at his house that my youthful ears, tuned then to the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe, were first thrilled with the Academician's pronunciation of the definite article. "*Un* homme de monde," calmly uttered the august Academician, passing the pepper without flinching or exhibiting the smallest sense of having committed a solecism. "*Un* homme du monde *a affirmé*," he repeated, regardless of his youthful interlocutor's eyes, that were almost tumbling into his soup-

plate. It was not until long afterwards that I ventured to inquire why he had—er—turned a man into—er—a woman upon that occasion. He laughed heartily, and explained that with certain purists in pronunciation the full value of the vowel “u” was not given unless it was thus elongated into what, to ears not accustomed to shades of sound in French, might appear to be a feminine.

I have made so many lions roar, in the course of these pages, that I have no scruple in adding a couple of genuine incidents in connection with the king of the forest and emperor of the desert.

The first refers to my good friend, Lessar, formerly Russian Minister at the Embassy in London. Lessar, a lean man with a limp and the eyes of a hawk, used to boast that he was the only Russian who had ever had a British Blue Book entirely devoted to his activities. He had long been the Russian Emissary in Persia, and had sat on all the Boundary Commissaries between this country, Persia, Afghanistan, and Russia—who was then supposed to nourish insidious designs regarding our Eastern possessions. He had inhabited such cities as Merv, Tashkent and Tiflis, having been Governor of the latter. When he liked, he was an excellent raconteur, and many an interesting evening have I spent with him at the St. James's and the Marlborough. He did not go much into Society beyond the strict necessity of official receptions: he said that he had found far better talk in those remote places where men had time to think about their lives and those of others than in the great Western capitals, where like Sir Claude Phillips in Max Beerbohm's caricature of that distinguished frequenter of parties, everybody was for ever “going on” too busy to

converse—and never getting anywhere. Lessar gave me a copy of the famous Blue Book with a very amiable dedication, and I hope some day to accord it a place of honour among my books in the “dome-shaped library” of my dreams. Poor fellow, he suffered a good deal from his back, and for days at a time was hardly at all visible to the external world, doing his official work in his own rooms. He was completely indifferent to life, which he looked upon as a mere spectacle that is bound to pass away, and has few moments that can leave a thrill. The fact was that he had already experienced practically all the thrills that can be obtained in a sublunar diplomatic existence. There was at one time an oyster scare: hardly anybody ate oysters, but Lessar took a dozen at luncheon and a dozen at dinner, because, as he explained, they are rather pleasant to the taste, and now one has also in eating them the entrancing possibility of hastening the adventure of death.

About this time he evolved another mode of obtaining an emotion. There was a lion-tamer with his cageful at the Westminster Aquarium, and the excellent Lessar one day invited me to lunch with him and watch him walk through the cage with the tamer. The tamer had said that there was only one lion from whom there was anything to fear, but he was a Tartar! The way it was done was by identifying Lessar with the tamer. Lessar wore a jacket and trousers of the same fawn colour, and rested his left hand on the shoulder of the tamer, who preceded him into the cage. Each carried a heavy steel bar in his right hand. There were four lions and two lionesses. As the tamer predicted, the Tartar sprang forward at Lessar, but he was immediately received with such a solid thump on the neck from the

tamer's steel bar that he slunk back into his corner, and for the rest of the entertainment limited himself to giving a superb view of his dentition and rousing the echos of the lofty hall with noble roars. In this he was joined by the remaining five: they made the scent-bottles on the adjacent perfumery stall leap. Lessar and the tamer proceeded in the most leisurely manner, united as described, and if looks could protect, certainly the steel of firm resolve in the eyes of the Russian was as useful as the steel bar had been.

On emerging from the cage Lessar remarked that it had quite given him an appetite for luncheon, so we adjourned to Romano's, where we had oysters—of course!—and other good things.

Had Lessar been gobbled up instead of his luncheon I was to go and break it gently to the Ambassador de Stahl, a delightful man of the world, who would no doubt have taken it as Stendhal did the retreat from Moscow, above described.

The other lion story, more recent in date, happened to my friend, the Hon. Mrs. Kenneth Dundas, whose husband was killed fighting our enemies in the Great War. They were then living near Nairobi, and the neighbouring country was well supplied with lions. A couple of friends came to stay with them for a few days' lion shooting. The morning after their arrival they sallied out, a party of four, Captain and Mrs. Dundas and the two friends. The country was an open undulating plain with here and there a small bush, not large enough to conceal a lion, so they had no doubt that if the game were about they would come upon it. They walked "miles and miles," as Mrs. Dundas describes it, each carrying a rifle. At last she became so tired that she said she must go home. Her husband

persuaded her to hold on until they could look down from the top of the slope they were then approaching. O Joy ! There in a cup-shaped hollow, not more than 120 yards away, were four magnificent beasts—two lions and two lionesses. As the only lady of the party, Mrs. Dundas was given first shot, and killed one of the two lions dead. The two lionesses immediately decamped, and one of the guests let go at the other lion, which he wounded badly. The beast saw and made for them crouching low and covering the ground amazingly fast, got within twenty yards. The other guest and her husband fired and missed. Meanwhile Mrs. Dundas had time to reload, but did not fire. "Why not?" I remember asking when she first told me the story. "I didn't like to, *because it wasn't my lion*, she replied (the italics are mine). By this time it was not more than ten yards off (of course the narrative takes longer than the event), so she asked her husband: "Shall I fire?" "Yes," he replied, so she and he (having just reloaded) fired together, and rolled the monster over stone dead—just in time. "It would certainly have got one of us in another second," she remarked placidly describing the incident.

"Because it wasn't my lion" is to my mind a uniquely British saying. Only on the calm lips of the British could the ethics of the pheasant shoot be applied to a lion's charge. What chance had the Germans against a country which can produce such magnificent sporting sang-froid?

How many of my countrymen have *discovered* Italy from the artistic point of view. Browning, of course, was one, and there are many others, but few enough considering our ever-growing population of those who

can afford the journey. Florence is, of course, the chief rallying point of our race, but other towns of the peninsula have also their unique charms.

No country so much as Italy inspires one with the sense of the infinite *potentialities of life*. From the days of the Renaissance when, as was said at the time, a new race of men seemed to walk the earth, Italy has possessed this capacity for bestowing a unique stimulus to the higher modes of existence. Intensity of life and exquisite beauty are the two chief messages of Italy and these she is destined to preach through the ages, with Russia a blinded bear groping in mud and darkness to the east, the Germanic, Czeco-Slovak and Jugo-Slav semi-barbarous States at her very gates. Italy is the marvel of the world, but one should not visit marvels in the company of Thomas Cook—at most permit that admirable firm to prepare the externals in the way of railway tickets, and do the rest yourself. But how are we to “do the rest, and what is it?” I may be asked. The rest varies with the individual: he must create his opportunities. Personally I have found it excellent to go to Florence and revel, and apply oneself afterwards to the literature and art. I shall supply a few notes as to how I revelled, which may afford a clue to others wise enough to be foolish while they are young.

Florence in the eighteen-nineties was probably not very different externally from the Florence of the seven-teen-nineties. But the charm of the city draws artistic people from all parts of the world, and in the 'nineties it was certainly one of the most interesting and amusing of cities. I had by this time left the Paris Embassy for good and was a free lance.

The society to which I refer was largely cosmo-

politan—English, American, French, Austrian, Italian. Mr. Rolshoven's, the painter's studio, was one of the chief *rendezvous*, and there were others not five minutes' walk from the Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele. It was full springtide in that happy clime, where one is sure of the sun, and we were all either ourselves in the springtime of our lives, or at least in quite early summer.

We frequented various *trattorias*, avoiding the fashionable restaurants, but mostly preferred rather sketchy snacks of food partaken of between the dances or processions or whatever was the fashion of the day or night. We would think nothing of descending from the summits of some star-pointing turret of Ghibelline date headed by the music that invariably accompanied us—our perambulating orchestra of three entertaining Italians—a man with a fiddle, one with a sort of glorified concertina and another with a horn from which proceeded weirdly beautiful sounds—for it goes without saying that our performers were artists and incapable of straying into discord. We proceeded to dance through the streets, led by Miss Ruth Anderson, that most graceful and beautiful girl who fascinated all those whom she met. Tall, with dark hair like tendrils, expressive arms and hands, and eyes like the Italian night, one could have sworn that she was Italian-born and treading the streets of her native town. Then there was Mrs. Bishop, who was also a graceful dancer. Crowds assembled, but behaved with perfect decorum, gravely making a circle round our chief performers and applauding their really artistic motions with that invariable and *sure* recognition which Italians have for all art manifestations, big and little. Ours was of course of the latter sort, but I do not think it would be possible in any country but Italy.





MISS RUTH ANDERSON AS *JULIET*.

To face p. 284.



Sometimes we would dine at a *trattoria* called, I think, Paoli's, and after frolicking about there with dance, song, and recitation, we would emerge upon the piazza and proceed towards our favourite tavern in the centre of the town, with its lofty terrace open to the stars and adorned with great pots of red roses, heavy with night and perfume. Armfuls of flowers were in our ladies' arms, and they would stand and fling them down to the crowd assembled below, which scrambled and jostled to possess the memories of such a night. I remember that Rolshoven remarked *à propos* of one of these nights: "Such things have not been done in Florence since Dante's time." That was a real compliment from the leading painter of the many established in Florence.

On another occasion we had a "Rose Party" at the Houghtons, on the terrace overlooking the Arno. Great torches flamed in their sockets, yellow and orange, against the blue-black rippling of the stream. At one end of the terrace was a red rose-tree, and down either side a series of little rose-bushes, white, yellow, and red. At the other end, a bed of tall white lilies, which swayed and sighed on the light breeze as a poor old wayfarer finds his way into this Enchanted Garden. He falls asleep under the red rose-tree. Then the lilies dance to him and wake him up, and he sits up to watch the dance. Then all the little rose-bushes dance a wild, happy dance around him, and take away his long grey beard, and his hump, and his stick, and make him into a young man again. He dances with them. Then the Spirit of Memory comes into the Garden bearing the rejected cloak and stick. The wayfarer becomes terrified, but the little rose-bushes cluster around him, and one of the lilies takes it upon herself

to expel the Spirit of Memory from the Garden. She dances him away, and then slowly sways back to the rose-bushes and the traveller who lies asleep at last under the red rose-tree. The lily then dances slowly to herself, and ends her dance with her back to the sleeping traveller, the rose-tree, and the rose-bushes, solitary in the Sleeping Garden.

That was a wonderful evening ! I can see the *loggia* now, with its uneven sloping floor and Miss Ruth Anderson, the Queen Lily, dancing upon it as though she really walked on air, and was only touching the floor out of politeness to her host. Beardsley's favourite plate was on the wall, about which he had quarrelled with Houghton. Whose was it ? Finally they decided to share it, each a fortnight alternately, until Beardsley, when he knew he was going to die, resigned it altogether to his friend. A voice at my elbow asks : and did you know Pater ? Yes, he had a head like a mask of old ivory, set with the sapphires that were his eyes, and with that a drooping moustache and slow deliberate movements as though a priest within were moving the idol. The Lily left me, and the dance began. Alexander was the Spirit of Memory, in black, with a wreath of irises, Chattie Hereward the Wake was wonderful in the rose dance, Rolshoven and I danced with the Lily Queen, Houghton wore grey flannels and a wreath of tiny pink roses ! He appeared by no means eccentric among us. When at last the Lily Queen's aunt imperatively demanded her presence, a dancing ring was formed around her, which it was found impossible to pierce. The aunt was finally included in the ring and made to dance with the rejuvenated old man in the hope that the rejuvenation might prove to be contagious !

Another wonderful day we spent at Signa in the garden of a gorgeous villa ; in such a garden (perhaps it was the very one) Boccaccio sat to tell his tales. It was like the stage in the garden scene of a production of *Twelfth Night*. It made one rub one's eyes and wonder if one were not dreaming some fairy tale or lost legend. There were the broad grass walks flanked by cypresses and ending in an old gateway, far at the other end, the old stone terraces of lovely colours and stone figures erect or couchant against dark ilex trees, and here and there stone balustrades, and beyond a view of Florence shimmering in the blue distance. The suggestion for acting was too strong to be resisted, especially with Ruth Anderson among us ; so with a background of green, and on a bit of old terrace, she did parts of *As You Like It*, and selections from Omar Khayyam by an old pillar overshadowed with ilex with a goblet of red wine in her hand. All wore garlands in the mode of the thirteenth century. We had a Bacchante with red hair twined in ivy, Rolshoven—a true artist ready to enter into the spirit of any revel—Rolshoven himself wore a wreath with two horns in the front made out of fir cones—as a satyr. Mr. Alucetti wore fir, Arthur Herbert a wreath of laurel, and looked like a Roman Emperor (my poor friend was afterwards drowned as King's Messenger carrying dispatches between London and the Hague), Francis Stirling, an ivy wreath with berries falling in bunches about his ears, Ruth Anderson, wild briar foliage pranked with anemones. Anemones everywhere starred the grass, with here and there a patch of purple, and now and then a tiny scarlet flame. It was all too good to be true—and proved it by disappearing with that marvellous day, that wonderful place

made for the capering of goats and the light footsteps of nymphs.

We had lunch by an old fountain where goldfish roamed and a hoary old Triton guarded them. The whole place seemed to belong to a Prince from nowhere, an old magnificent and even invisible host and to this day I have no notion to whom the villa belonged. It was wonderful, and makes the very ink vibrate with the blood of youth ! That splendid sun, those flitting fleecy clouds, grass studded with mauve and white, and the tall dark commanding cypresses : add to this the old warm stone-work—warmed by the passionate sun himself—and our youth—and then keep calm if you can. We enjoyed the minutes, every one of them, imitating the statues who surveyed us—so gravely—donning wreaths renewed, with the pond for looking-glass. We tried to be classical !

I wonder if any of my readers will understand the feeling for other days that animated us—other stories, other lives, played out in this enchanted ground. We all had what may be described as the early Italian fever : it gripped us more strongly even than love, in any of its forms, in that old garden of distant yesterdays. Ruth Anderson was the inspiration of us all—would I could rouse old Landor from his villa over the hill at Fiesole to write another *Rose Aylmer* in her honour—in her Early Italian robe, shining in and out between those cypresses and statues ; as a wood-nymph she leapt and tossed about the flowers that were handed to her in armfuls, dancing with starry flowers in her hair and the water for a mirror, or chasing a goat to wreath leaves around its neck—or flying from the satyr swiftly over that green grass with her bare feet, fleeter by far than he, gyrating in and out of the

ilex shrubs and round the cypresses—to fall panting upon some stone bench, utterly free and careless beneath that blue Italian sky.

*Semel insanavimus omnes*—we have all, I suppose, been mad once, and I should be glad to say good-bye to sanity for a few days at any time if I could again find myself in that Florence of the 'nineties.

I have purposely avoided all tourist talk of picture galleries and places of interest, for these, although I frequented them incidentally, were much less real than that first fervour of knowing Italy, which I have striven (so imperfectly) to convey in these last pages of my "Adventures." The literature and art of Italy followed for me in the wake of this first *vital* awareness of the splendour of Italy and of all that it means for us natives of the north.

That winter I decided to spend at all costs in Italy, though it meant cancelling various engagements in England. I was at Milan at the time, and just as on a former occasion in the Western Highlands, as previously recorded in these "Adventures," awoke with a poem in my head, which I venture to transcribe as a valedictory offering to those readers who have done me the honour to accompany me upon this little trip to Cythera and Arcadia by way of Piccadilly, the Corso and the Elysian Fields of Paris.

In this volume I have said but little of Italy. In another, which is in preparation, I shall attempt to do her more efficient justice, my chief contribution hitherto having been to make the literary criticism and philosophy of Croce known to the English-speaking world ten years or so earlier than would have been the case, had I not visited Naples in 1906. Hundreds of professors and students had passed through Croce's city for years

without apparently being struck in any way with the splendour of the new thought, upon which our literary critics have since based themselves, from Mr. Clutton Brock and Mr. Walkley downwards.



## ITALY THE ENCHANTRESS.

Italy, Italy, England how clear she cries,  
"Come o'er the Alps again, come o'er the snow,  
Dance through the vintage of France with the dear free eyes,  
Dance with the nymphs of the Seine as you go."

Italy, Italy, why should I cling to thee,  
Thou that hast worshippers better a score,  
Poets and painters and lovers to bring to thee  
Passionate kisses and memories of yore?

Italy, Italy, I too I love thee well,  
I that have scarce touched thy cheek with my lips,  
Scarce seen the sun kiss thy turreted citadel,  
Scarce seen thy smile set the world in eclipse.

Laura Petrarca, Paolo Francesca,  
Beatrice Dante, the cadences fall,  
Muse of the Harmony Ariostesca,  
Tasso, the silvery syllables call.

Italy, Italy, I too was made for thee,  
Changed at my birth for some child of the mist;  
I dwelt afar while he sang and he played for thee  
Music on lutes that my fathers had kissed.

Now at the last I have found and I cleave to thee,  
Land that my footsteps have trodden so late,  
Well will it be if my passing may leave to thee  
One northern pearl for the Crown of thy State:

Pearl not of oyster that slumbers in ocean,  
Fair but unworthy thy forehead to bind,  
Pearl of the thought of eternal devotion,  
Italy, Queen of the heart and the mind!

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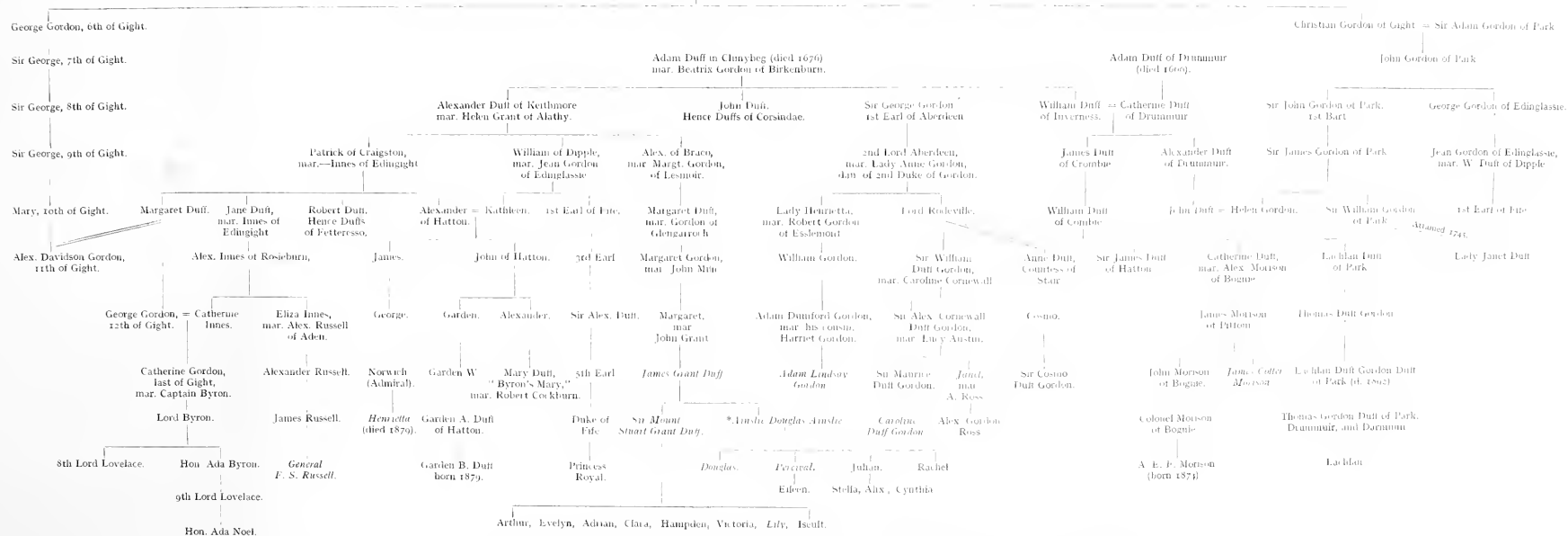


A Table bringing out the Literary Instincts of the Two.

SA WILLIAM GORDON, Founder of the Gight Family. Killed at Flodden, 1513.

John Gordon of Gight.

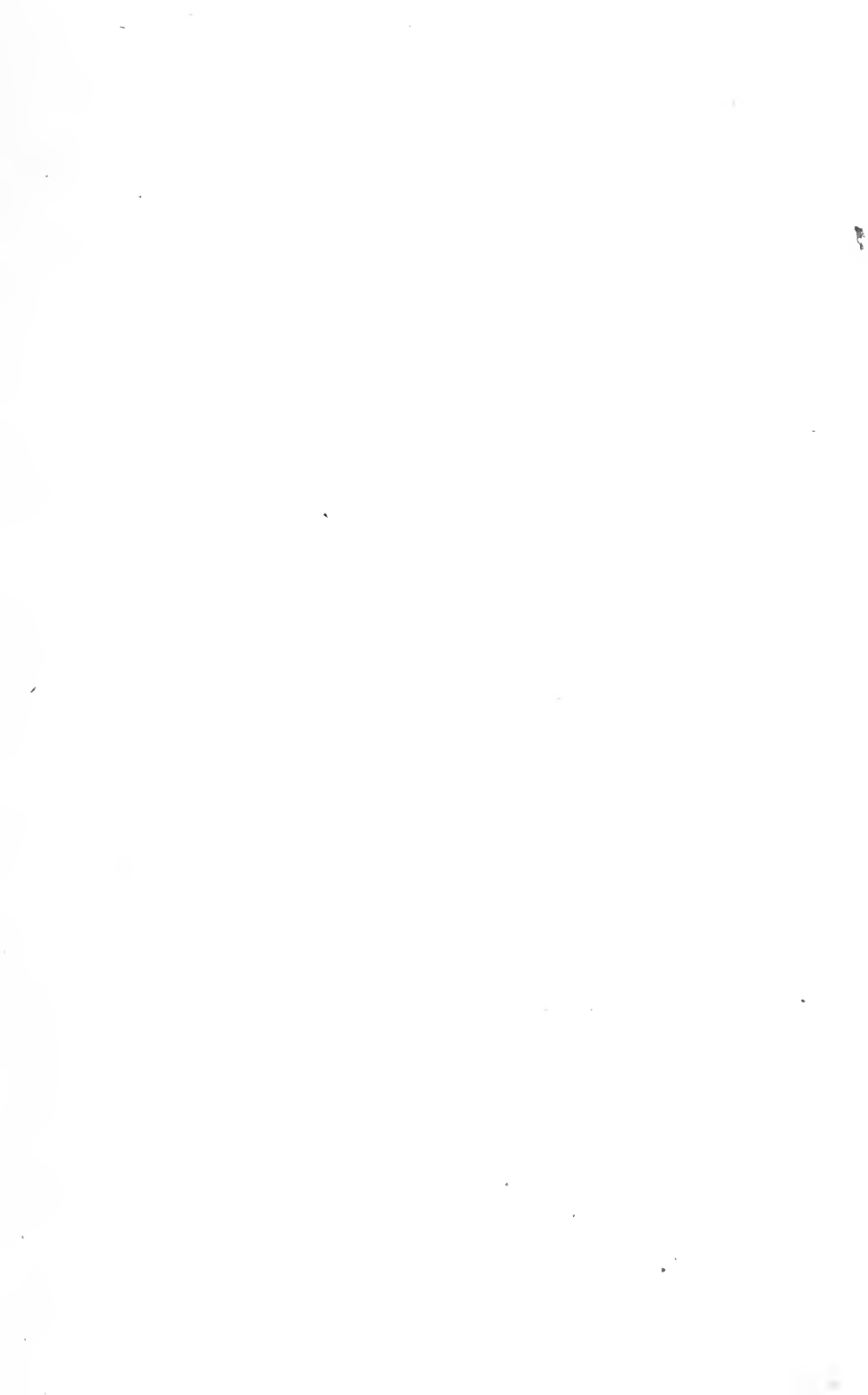
William Gordon, 5th of Gight.



\* Born Ainslie Grant Duff. Changed to Ainslie Douglas Ainslie on succeeding to Debaty Castle, Aberdeen, and Bleue in Morayshire.

*This Table has been drawn up by Mr. J. M. Bullock, Historian of the Gordons. Editor of the "Graphic" by whom it was presented to me, and is here submitted with his kind consent and the addition of the Princess Royal's name to the Fife succession.*



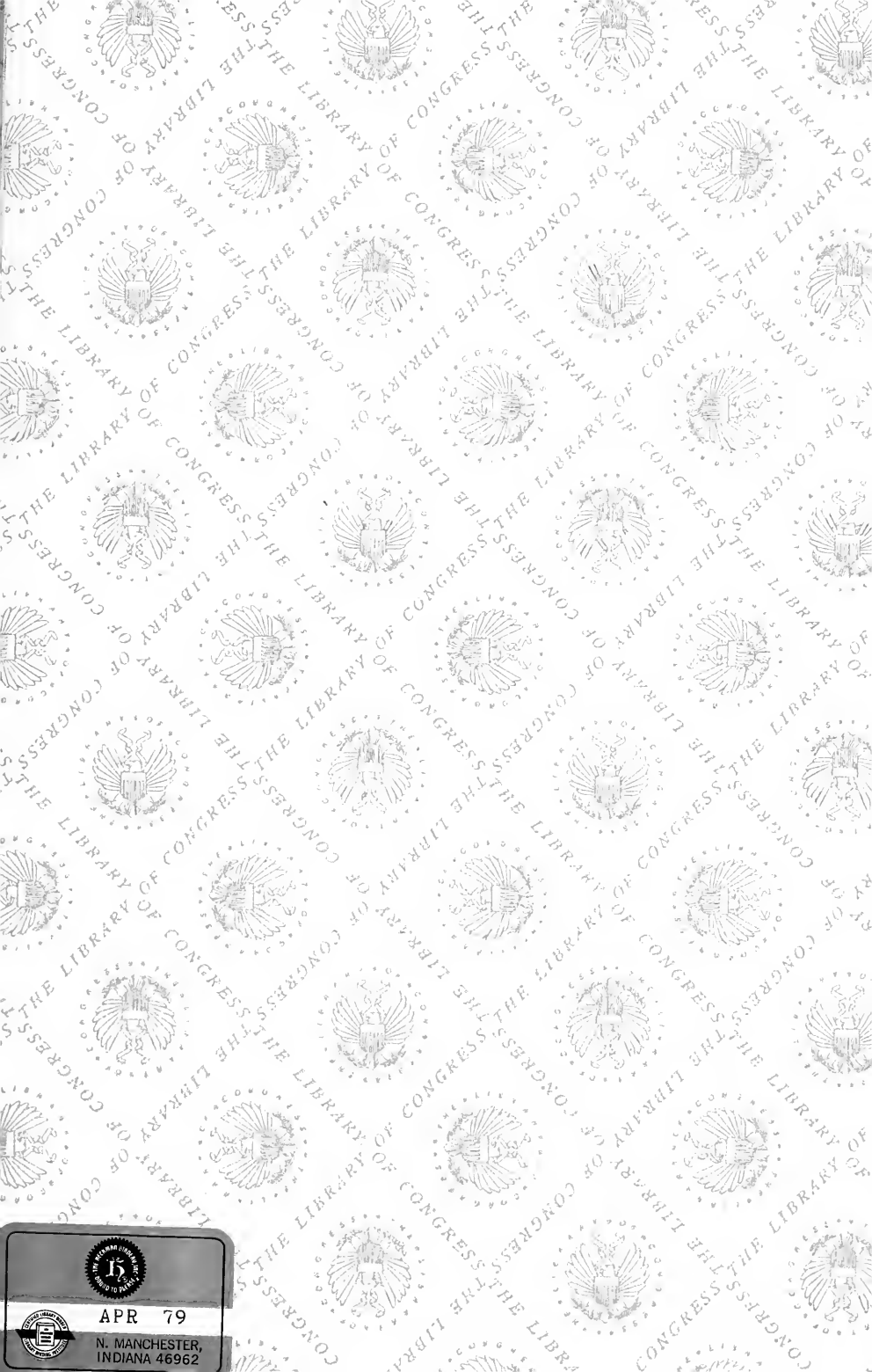












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